

**TODAY**

**MARIE CLAIRE'S MEN ON WOMEN**

**FREE TODAY**

**MR BEAN GOES TO HOLLYWOOD**

**MAGAZINE**

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**WEEKEND**

**TAX: WHO DID BEST**

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**MONDAY**

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Hackles rise over 'no tartan tax'

## Blair accused of insulting the Scots

By Gillian Bowditch, Arthur Leathley and Philip Webster

TONY BLAIR suffered his worst day of the election campaign so far yesterday after comparing Labour's proposed Scottish parliament to an English parish council and banning it from raising taxes for at least five years.

Travelling north to rally his Scottish troops, Mr Blair further upset his hosts by saying that if Labour were elected, sovereignty would remain with Westminster and with "me as an English MP".

John Major exploited Mr Blair's tough reception by claiming that the Labour campaign was falling apart. "The moment they are asked questions in detail they don't know the answers," he said. "They can produce slogans, fine words and the soft smiles but when it comes to hard substance which determines what government is really about, they fall to pieces."

The Prime Minister also rewrote his speech for his Albert Hall campaign rally last night to concentrate on Labour's discomfort. He claimed that Mr Blair's shift on devolution was a sign of untrustworthiness on other policies, and he predicted daily changes of stance as Labour's programme was put to the test.

He told 2,000 Tory activists: "Mr Blair both insults Scotland and breaks the promise he has given them for a long time. This is a man who only

**ELECTION 97**

Reports, analysis	9-15
Magnus Linklater	9
Peter Riddell	13
Matthew Parris	13
Simon Jenkins	20
Leading article	21

yesterday asked people to trust him. What a fall is here — from powerhouse to parish council in a soft phrase too many from the Labour leader. Not a minor matter of detail. It strikes at the heart of the United Kingdom itself."

But Mr Blair's aides professed satisfaction with the day's events, saying he had spent all day winning the headlines for making plain that the Scots would face no tax increases under Labour.

However, his announcement that a Scottish Parliament would not be able to use its tax-raising powers — while doing no more than bringing Scotland into line with his pledge for the rest of Britain — inevitably raised questions about why he was giving it the powers in the first place.

Under Labour proposals, the parliament would have the ability to vary the basic rate of income tax by 3p in the pound. But *The Times* disclosed last year that Mr Blair would not allow it to raise taxes, a report vigorously denied by his aides.

Yesterday Mr Blair con-

firmed for the first time that that was the case, but said that having the power to raise tax did not mean that it would be used. Becoming increasingly tetchy with journalists who questioned him about the apparent inconsistency, he insisted: "Having a power is not the same as using that power. The Labour Party is committed to not raising the basic and top rates of income tax. That commitment applies in Scotland as much as it applies in the rest of the UK."

Mr Blair's words about sovereignty were also certain to raise Scottish hackles, even though constitutionally, the Westminster Parliament would remain sovereign after devolution. In March 1999 every Scottish Labour MP except Tam Dalyell signed a document entitled "Claim of Right" which acknowledged "the sovereign right of the Scottish people".

Yesterday Mr Blair flatly contradicted that document by saying: "Sovereignty remains with Westminster that is why it is devolution. That is the constitutional fact. Devolution is the sensible third way between the Tories' policy of no change and the lunatic separatism of the SNP."

Scottish sensibilities were further enraged by an article in *The Scotsman* in which the Labour leader appeared to liken the tax-raising powers of



Joe Tizzard preparing yesterday to chase Grand National fortune with the country's leading jump jockeys. "You can't stop to think about the risks"

## Young blood jumps at chance of National glory

By Rob Hughes

JOE TIZZARD, the 17-year-old son of a Dorset dairy farmer, will attempt to become the youngest Grand National winner for 60 years today.

With his 16-year-old girlfriend Caroline Tiffin and his parents in tow, he arrives straight out of school with nine GCSEs, a full set of teeth — which is uncommon among National Hunt jockeys — and the philosophy: "If you think about ending up in a wheelchair, you would never get on a horse."

Tizzard's birthday is December 13. If he were to win on the 661-outside Straight Talk, he would be the second

youngest National winner this century, two weeks older than Bruce Hobbs, who won on Battleship, in 1938.

The Grand National, apart from its 30 fearsome fences and gruelling effect on the limbs and nerves of the country's most hardened jump jockeys, apparently holds no trepidation for Tizzard. He left school in the summer and, when not being brought down to earth milking the 180 Friesian cows on his parents' farm at Milborne Port, or shovelling manure, he dreams of keeping his weight down and chasing the achievements of his grandfather Dick Netley, who saddled Loving Words, which took third in the 1982

National. When Joe was a year old, he was put on the family pony, and insisted on riding around in his grandfather's colours.

The Jockey Club granted the young amateur special dispensation to ride with the 38 competitors in respect for his seven victories under rules and 17 wins in point-to-point races, in which his father Colin is a trainer.

The owner, trainer and backers of Straight Talk all describe Tizzard as an able and gifted horseman beyond his years.

Undismayed by the fact that on his last visit to Aintree Straight Talk, a ten-year-old bay gelding, unseated Tony

McCoy, arguably the leading National Hunt jockey of the day, Tizzard describes his race plan. "I shall drive up to Aintree with my father in the morning, then walk the course," he says confidently. "In the race, I'm hoping to creep through the field and take the lead in the final third... You can't stop to think about the risks."

Alas, not everyone will be cheering for him. A mystery punter who placed a bet of £76,000 with William Hill in London, stands to win £550,000 if Wyldes Hide wins at 16-1.

Form guide, page 42  
Preview, page 48

## Ashdown plea for the 'can-do' spirit

By Our Political Editor

PADDY ASHDOWN rejected suggestions that a Liberal Democrat vote would be wasted yesterday as he promised fresh spending on education and health, financed by an extra penny on income tax and a new top rate of 50p.

Launching his party's manifesto Mr Ashdown said: "A Liberal vote is not a wasted vote if you want more investment in your kid's school, if you want more investment to solve the crisis in the hospitals. A Liberal Democrat vote is the only vote you have got."

"It's not a wasted vote in those 150 seats where the Liberal Democrat is the only alternative to the Conservatives."

Putting the cost of his policies at 45p a week for the average taxpayer, he added: "If you don't think 45p is worth it to make sure your kid gets a decent education to prepare us for the future, that we don't have to sack all those teachers that are being sacked at present year after year; that your child doesn't have to be in a class of 40 or more; to make sure they don't have to use photocopyers to study in the evening; that they have access to computers to prepare us for the future, the answer is simple — don't vote for us."

"We are told that nothing can be done. That it has to be like this. It doesn't have to be like this. We've got to break the fatalism of our politics. We've got to get this country's 'can-do' spirit back and there is nothing we cannot achieve."

Manifesto details, page 13

## Boning up on the evolutionary scale

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

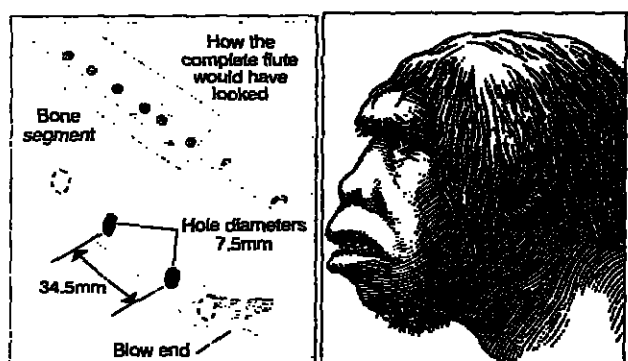
NEANDERTHAL Man could play sweet music, according to an analysis of the oldest known musical instrument, a flute made from the thigh bone of a bear.

The flute was found in a cave in Slovenia, and dated to between 43,000 and 67,000 years ago — at least 10,000 years older than any previously known instrument.

The bone, less than four inches long, contains two neatly drilled holes and the traces of two more at its broken end. Now Bob Fink, a Canadian musician, has worked out the notes the flute could play when it was complete.

He concludes that the instrument is based on the same seven-note scale used in modern Western music. The flute as it survives could play four notes (Mi, Fa, So and La) in a minor key.

In its original form it would have been about 15 inches long and capable of playing the entire scale. He has made a



The bone flute: sweet music from Neanderthal Man

flute matching the pattern of holes found in the bone, and found that when played it confirmed the analysis.

The results are striking because Neanderthals are generally considered to have been uncultured humans with no language and no art. If confirmed, they cast a new light on their behaviour.

Neanderthals first appeared about 200,000 years ago and disappeared 30,000 years ago. Most experts now believe that they were a dead-end in human evolution, an offshoot that did not evolve into modern man but was eventually replaced by him.

The results also suggest, in Mr Fink's view, that the notion of harmony is "hard-wired" into the human brain, not something that is learnt. This view, which is opposed

by many musicologists, is backed by research showing that babies react differently to a pair of harmonious notes played together than they do to a pair of discordant notes.

The section of flute was found in July 1995 by Slovenian archaeologist Dr Ivan Turk alongside other Neanderthal artefacts. Teeth and soil from the same layer of earth in which the flute was found were dated by Dr Bonnie Blackwell of Queens College in New York.

She concluded it was at least 43,000 years old and possibly as old as 67,000 years.

She acknowledged that the holes could have been made by an animal but added: "It would be pretty surprising to have an animal make them in such a straight line."

Dr Turk said: "The flute reinforces the basic humanness of the Neanderthals. I can't imagine a group having conscious music without having language."

## Why the cereal fillers have more get up and go

By Jeremy Laurance, Health Correspondent

THE ideal breakfast is a glass of orange juice, a cup of coffee and a bowl of cereal.

People who start the day with a slug of vitamin C, a dose of caffeine and a helping of carbohydrate are happier and perform better throughout the morning, Professor Andy Smith of the University of Bristol said.

A study of 600 people who were asked to record their breakfast habits found that those who regularly ate cereal first thing in the morning had a more positive mood compared with those who ate other foods or had no breakfast. Elderly cereal eaters were also found to have higher IQs.

However the same meal eaten later in the day did not have the same effect, and researchers are investigating how breakfast enhances performance. "It is

possibly the effect of the glucose — the primary fuel of the brain. After fasting overnight you need it," Professor Smith told the British Psychological Society conference in Edinburgh.

"We did not look at the type of cereal eaten, but it would be interesting to know whether cornflakes or All Bran has the greater effect," he added.

The study provided no information about cooked breakfasts because the diets of the non-cereal eaters were not

recorded. But other research has shown that cooked breakfasts do improve mood, probably because they are now unusual and regarded as a treat.

In further research, Professor Smith said that people who drank the equivalent of four cups of coffee a day performed more efficiently throughout the day than those who drank less and he suggested that sensible employers should hand out free coffee or tea.

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WEATHER	24	LETTERS	21, 37	BUSINESS	25-28, 39, 40	SHOPPING: WEEKEND	3
CROSSWORD	24	OBITUARIES	23	WEEKEND MONEY	29-38	GAMES: WEEKEND	25
COURT & SOCIAL	22	SIMON JENKINS	20	SPORT	41-48	TRAVEL: WEEKEND	15-23

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## Teachers boo Shephard attack on union

By DAVID CHARTER  
EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

GILLIAN SHEPHARD was hissed and booed by more than 500 teachers yesterday after she said that industrial action was unacceptable behaviour. The Education and Employment Secretary was heckled as teachers insisted that giving parents the power to stop them striking would deepen the crisis of indiscipline in schools.

Speaking to the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, Mrs Shephard defended Conservative manifesto plans to allow those affected by strikes to halt them with a court

injunction. The union said that this would give even more power to unruly pupils and their parents to disrupt school life. The union has won several high-profile victories against troublesome children by threatening to strike if forced to teach them, and will consider industrial action next term to prevent the return on appeal of two boys expelled for carrying an air pistol at Yorkshire Martyrs Collegiate School, Bradford. Mrs Shephard yesterday praised the union for bringing discipline problems at The Ridings School, Halifax, into the spotlight, but said striking was "not the way for professional people to behave".

In an uncompromising perfor-

mance at the NASUWT annual conference in Bournemouth, she endured jeers throughout her speech over nursery vouchers, school inspection and plans to appraise teachers based on their pupils' results.

The barracking marked a growing stand-off between politicians and teacher unions during their Easter conference season.

David Blunkett, Mrs Shephard's Labour Shadow, told the more militant National Union of Teachers that he would not accept "bullying" tactics from teachers. He said it was not acceptable for them to strike over government policies.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the NASUWT, said he would

balloon his 165,000 members for industrial action if the next Government did not cut workload within a year. The union yesterday voted to boycott after-school homework clubs, a key part of Labour's plans, unless they were paid extra. Labour responded by saying it wanted the clubs to be staffed by students and elderly volunteers.

A survey for the union next week will confirm teachers' dissatisfaction with politicians by showing a large percentage undecided over who to vote for. Mr de Gruchy said: "Both manifestos of the two main parties are so uninteresting. The Conservative re-hashes all the old arguments about structure and does nothing to

raise the morale of teachers. Labour makes more of a move towards helping the teaching profession by reducing class sizes."

Mr de Gruchy told Mrs Shephard her plans further to limit industrial action struck "at the very heart of human freedom".

Mrs Shephard said the conference had been "stimulating and enjoyable" and left in defiant mood. "You have said goodbye to me but don't hold your breath," she said. "I'll be back."

Mr de Gruchy responded: "We hope to welcome you back. I am sure it will be quite an experience to come back as a Shadow of your former self."

## Central London gridlocked by rail bomb alerts

By RICHARD FORD AND  
MICHAEL HORSNELL

LARGE areas of central London were gridlocked last night after bomb alerts at mainline rail stations forced the closure of surrounding main roads.

As British Transport police searched King's Cross, St Pancras, Waterloo and Euston after telephoned threats, senior officers held an anti-terrorist summit to discuss ways of combating a new IRA strategy aimed at causing maximum disruption in the run-up to the election.

A spokesman for the AA said: "Major roads have been sealed off because of security alerts and central London is pretty well gridlocked. This is one of the worst cases of delay we have ever seen."

The alerts led to the suspension for several hours of mainline rail services in and out of King's Cross, St Pancras and the Thameslink line at King's Cross. Underground services were also suspended before the start of the rush-hour. Tube trains were later allowed to run but not to stop at King's Cross.

Traffic problems were exacerbated by subsidence at Westminster Underground station due to excavations for the Jubilee Line. Eastbound traffic was not allowed to cross Westminster Bridge.

The anti-terror summit took place as police reopened stretches of the M5 and the

The driver of an articulated lorry died early yesterday when it careered off a bridge and blocked the main West Coast railway line. No other vehicle was involved in the accident on the A519 in the Staffordshire hamlet of Millmecc, near Ecdeshall. The crash affected commuters trying to avoid traffic jams caused by the M5 and M6 closures.

M6 in the West Midlands which had been closed to traffic for more than 30 hours after bombs were planted under an elevated section of the carriageway. There were unconfirmed reports that one of the bombs placed under the M6 contained up to 1½ lb of Semtex high explosive, enough to cause severe damage to a main junction.

Commander John Grieve, head of Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch, took part in the summit in his role as national co-ordinator for combating terrorist activity.

Mervyn Jones, Chief Constable of Cheshire, said the meeting demonstrated that the country's 43 police forces worked very closely on tackling terrorism. "By collectively looking at the pattern of activity in these incidents, we are able to address the big picture and bring together all of the information relevant to our particular investigations."



Simon Pemberton (Peter Wingfield), left, and Eddie Grundy (Trevor Harrison)

## Forget the polls, Eddie's safe

By ROBIN YOUNG

A VILLAGE crisis that sparked a nationwide campaign ended happily last night as the both-and-mend Grundys kept control of Grange Farm in The Archers, defeating eviction by dastardly landlord, Simon Pemberton.

The latest plot in the Radio 4 drama had appeared to grip more of Middle England than the election, and led listeners launching a pro-Grundy campaign which sought the support of John Gummer, the Environment Secretary.

Despite an agricultural track record which included a conviction for leaving sheep undipped two years ago, another for polluting the river with slurry run-off from their

ill-kept farmyard, and no fewer than eight livestock escapes in the past year alone, Eddie Grundy was heard by four million listeners as he returned from an agricultural tribunal hearing and told his wife, Clarrie: "We've won love. It's all right now Clarrie. It's all over."

Pemberton had based his case for eviction on two points: the Grundys' poor husbandry and the argument that the land could be more profitably used if farmed directly by the estate. The evidence which turned the verdict against him was given by Shula Hebden (née Archer), formerly Pemberton's estate agent, who weighed in as expert farming witness on behalf of her family's erstwhile enemies, the grubby

and ever-grumbling Grundys. Pemberton may not be finished yet. There could be trouble ahead for Susan Carter, his employee, who risked her job by telling the Grundys' legal representative that he secretly planned to put Grange Farm entirely down to the EU grant-rich crop of the moment, flax.

"This has been one of our most successful stories of recent years," said *The Archers* editor, Vanessa Whitburn, criticised in the past for introducing swearing, drug taking, armed robbery, suicide, racism, domestic violence and abortion to the everyday saga of countryfolk. "It featured a dramatic conflict between strong characters, while reflecting the real erosion of smaller, traditional farms."

## Islanders celebrate buy-out

The 64 islanders of Egg were celebrating last night after having bought the Hebridean isle, ending the long and bitter reign of absentee private lairds. Their £15 million offer was accepted by those acting for Martin Eckhart Maruma, a German artist who bought Egg less than two years ago. The island is "dry", with no pubs or hotels, but islanders believe that private cellars will provide a celebratory drink. The Isle of Egg Heritage Trust will become the official island owners on June 12.

## Woman starved

The daughter of a former Tory MP starved to death, a coroner's court found. Catherine Bingham, 39, of Heswall, Merseyside, weighed three stone when police found her dead at home last month. Her father was the late Richard Bingham.

## Murder charge

Police last night charged Samson Gower, 18, with the murder of poet Deborah Thomas, 37, who was found battered to death in her blazing home in Brighton on Easter Day. He will appear at the town's magistrates' court this morning.

## Record GP quits

Dr Adrian Caro, who once held the world record for the most hours on duty in a week — 139 — is to retire from general practice in Dereham, Norfolk, because of stress. In 1971 he led a junior hospital doctors' strike against excessive working hours.

## Princess's riches

Diana, Princess of Wales, has made her first appearance in the annual listing by *The Sunday Times* of Britain's 1,000 richest people. Her divorce settlement helped her to share 916th place with the cook Delia Smith. Both women are worth £17 million.

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## Scotland

Continued from page 1  
a Scottish parliament to those of an English parish council. His comparison may have been designed to reassure English voters who fear that Labour could destabilise Britain with its plans for constitutional change. But the Scots took it as a further emasculation of the parliament they have waited 300 years to see.

Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, said: "Tony Blair's dismissive remarks about a Scottish parliament betray the extent to which he has duped his own Scottish supporters. If he agrees with us that sovereignty must remain at Westminster, why does he not abandon this reckless scheme?"

The comparison of a Scottish parliament with a parish council was "blatantly dishonest", but if what Scotland was to get was "no more significant than a parish council, why risk the integrity of the United Kingdom?"

Almond, leader of the Scottish National Party, said: "Tony Blair's reversal of Scottish sovereignty goes to the very heart of new Labour's retreat on the Scottish constitution. And likening the powers of an assembly to those of a local authority gives the game away about the weakness of devolution. Blair has blown the Scottish election wide open with these devastating remarks."

Sir David Steel of the Liberal Democrats said: "Tony Blair should leave talking about Scotland to his Scottish colleagues who understand the issues. Sadly when he opens his mouth on the subject he puts his foot in it."

"He says 'sovereignty resides with the Westminster parliament' and 'that we are not devolving sovereignty'. Frankly that is gobbledegook."

## Sellafield fined over unsafe transport

OPERATORS of the Sellafield nuclear plant showed a "total disregard" of repeated warnings that a bridge carrying radioactive waste over a railway line was in danger of collapse, a magistrate said yesterday.

British Nuclear Fuels was fined the maximum of £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,844 by Whitehaven Magistrates' Court in Cumbria after it admitted breaching the Radioactive Substances Act.

The court was told that, for more than six years, the state-owned company failed to act on a series of recommendations that it should carry out "urgent and immediate" repair work on the 100-yard long bridge carrying the main low-level radioactive discharge from the plant over the Barrow-to-Carlisle railway line and out into the Irish Sea.

Steven Zdolny, for the prosecution, told the court that there had been a risk that a collapse of the bridge could fracture the pipe and allow radioactive material to escape. Frank Hornsby, the chairman of the Bench, said the public had a right to expect that BNF should fully carry out its responsibilities. "The total disregard of reports prepared between 1990 and 1995 recommending urgent remedial action is of grave concern," he said.

The Environment Agency, which brought the prosecution, accepted that the environmental results of any collapse of the bridge would have been small because the plant's leak-detection system would have shut off the discharge.

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# Ford Escort reaches the end of the road

BY TIM JONES

THE Ford Escort, one of the most famous yet derided names in motoring, is nearing the end of the road. More than 30 years after the People's Car rolled off the production lines, Ford is looking to rename the humble family saloon which has numbered Diana, Princess of Wales, Essex Woman and the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, among its fans.

The company is seeking to consign the name to the history books and come up with a sleeker, slicker moniker to drive the car into the new millennium. It is a high-risk strategy which yesterday surprised industry experts and the advertising agencies which know the value of a tried and tested brand name. The move may even dismay some of the 18 million people worldwide who have bought the modest mid-market saloon which has been restyled many times since it was launched in its Mark I form in 1968.

Although no firm decision has yet been taken, the company is expected to pay image consultants up to £500,000 to come up with a new name. For a car which has supplied the company's bread-and-butter profits for three decades, it will be a decision Ford cannot afford to get wrong.

In spite of being associated with Essex girls and having its acoustic properties tested by young men with loud music systems, the Escort has also been loved by upmarket enthusiasts. Diana, Princess of



Satisfied customers: Ford Escort drivers have come from all walks of life and have included Diana, Princess of Wales, and Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor

Wales, once owned a 115 mph Ford Escort Cabriolet and Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, still drives a red M-registered model.

Professor Garel Rhys, an industry expert of Cardiff University, said: "Escort is already a European name. It is unthinkable that VW or Toyota would kick names such as Golf or Corolla into touch."

Trevor Beattie, creative director of GGT advertising,

said: "I am not surprised they are thinking of changing the name, just disappointed. The Escort name, after all these years, means something. I just know a new name will be something ludicrous and meaningless, wind-tested so as not to offend any nation on Earth. I dread to think what they will come up with."

Moray MacLennan of M&C Saatchi, the advertising agency, said: "Changing the name of a well-loved product

can be dangerous but the company will not be altering the essential Fordness of the car."

"They will want a name which will retain the heritage and warm values of the old product while creating something for the new millennium. It could be quite tricky."

Since it first rolled off the production line in 1968, as a sedate family saloon which went from 0-60 in a stately 22.3 seconds, reaching a top speed

of 75 mph, the Escort has undergone five reincarnations. The latest 1.8 injection two door cabriolet reaches 60mph in 10 seconds and has a top speed of 120 mph.

Special editions, much favoured by boy racers, have included the Mexico, the RS2000, XR3i and the exotically named Calypso. And where they were once sold in only bland colours they now can be had in Chianti Red, Mint Green, Bahama Blue and

Spring Violet. For three years in a row, in the early 1980s, the Escort was the world's best-selling car and, until recently, the top-selling model in Britain.

Ford's decision earlier this year to cease producing the Escort at its plant in Halewood, Merseyside, threatened the company with a national strike. That was averted only when the Government stepped in with a £15 million grant to ensure

that a "people carrier", based on the Escort, would be made at the factory.

The replacement car for the current model, known only as the "World Escort", is to be built in Cologne. It will be launched next year.

A spokesman for the company said no decision had been taken on whether the Escort name would be scrapped. "We cannot confirm or deny what the replacement will be called."

## Cemetery extension is grave intrusion for tycoon

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

A TYCOON who once said he was driven by fear of death has blocked plans to extend a village cemetery onto a section of his Scottish estate, Christopher Moran, says it would spoil the view.

Mr Moran, 49, says he is not prepared to part with the third of an acre site to Moray council, even if they offered £1 million. He says any expansion would mean that he could see graves from the top windows of Cabrach House on Speyside.

The land is needed to extend the 200-year-old cemetery beside Cabrach parish church. Moray council, which wants the area legally designated as a burial ground, is seeking a compulsory purchase order from Elgin Sheriff Court. The council says the extension would last the community for another 200 years.

Mr Moran, 49, who heads an insurance broking and investment business in London, is one of Britain's wealthiest men. He owns the Cabrach and Glenfiddich estates near Dufftown, which cover 46,000 acres across the heart of Scotland's malt whisky country.

In a profile in a Sunday newspaper he was reputed to be worth about £150 million. He said his ambition and drive came from his fear of death. "The one thing on my mind since I was a child is that I am going to die. Time is short and if you have the ability it is a duty to do what you can. I cannot waste a day."

Mr Moran, who was not available for comment yesterday, has offered two alternative sites on his land for the cemetery, which the council says are unsuitable because they would create a separate graveyard, preventing relatives being buried next to loved ones.

## Consultant will be paid £500,000 to test-drive new brand name

BY ALAN COPPS

WHATEVER name is chosen to replace the long-serving Escort, the £500,000 Ford is expected to pay a branding consultant will be money well spent if it avoids some of the deeper potholes on the road to a new car name.

Even the world's most prestigious carmaker is not immune. Rolls-Royce wanted to add to its renowned catalogue of Silver Ghosts and Silver Shadows a model named the Silver Mist —

until a linguist among the executives at Crewe pointed out that "Mist" in German meant "dung". Toyota has exactly the same problem in France, where its neat little MR2 coupe, enunciated in French as "Emm-erre-deux", sounds rather like "merde".

General Motors' problem in Spain was less scatological but just as tricky. When the Vauxhall Nova was renamed the Corsa, the official reason was the harmonisation of marketing throughout Europe, but the real problem was that in Spain

Nova is the equivalent of saying "it doesn't go".

The Escort can justly claim to be the first "Eurocar". Identical models made at Halewood on Merseyside and Cologne in Germany were introduced in 1967 and more than 18.5 million have been sold worldwide since then. But the name harks back to the days when cosy but dignified Anglo-Saxon titles like Prefect, Popular and Anglia adorned Ford's bestsellers, a far cry from the aggressive Probe, animal Puma and all-embracing Mondeo

which grace some of its current range.

One of the biggest consultancies in the business is the London-based Interbrand, which has worked for most of the world's carmakers. Interbrand gets a thorough briefing on the car's specification and intended market, and then calls in its brainstorming committee — 100 part-timers ranging from resting actors to housewives, from civil servants to peers.

"These are all people chosen for their wide vocabularies, their com-

mand of imagery and their ability to converse together," says Interbrand's Tom Blackett. "They do The Times crossword, they are good at Scrabble, they have verbal facility and felicity. Ten or 12 have been with us since we started 22 years ago."

"We have access to the registers of names run by national motor industries and have our own massive database. We also have a software programme which can assemble words at random. "We might give it a three-letter

start and see what comes out. Suzuki wanted a name to project the vitality of their small off-roader, so we gave the computer 'Vit' and asked for every vowel-consonant-vowel combination to finish it off. In the long string of quasi-words that came streaming out we found Vitara. They liked it."

In fact the Japanese take the biscuit when it comes to car names, giving us such gems as the Nissan Cedric and the Mazda Bongo Friendee. Toyota's latest offering in Britain is the Picnic.

## Murder witness's hands cut off in pub

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A MURDER trial witness told a court yesterday how his hands were almost severed with a butcher's knife when he was attacked by a gang in a crowded pub.

Members of the gang pinned down David Jacobs and stopped other drinkers coming to his aid during the attack, which was part of a campaign of intimidation against witnesses, Worcester Crown Court was told.

Mr Jacobs, 32, a former builder who is unable to work because of his injuries, said he had been chatting to friends in a pub in Rubery, Birmingham, last year when he noticed a group walk in at closing time. "I saw one of them had a mask on and he looked round at me and pulled a big knife out of his coat. It was about 18 inches long and looked like it was sharp on both sides."

Mr Jacobs threw his glass at the man and tried to run away but was cornered. "I looked at my hands and I could see broken bones and tendons. My hands were hanging off. I got back up on my feet and that was when the blood started coming. I started shouting 'get an ambulance'." His hands were sewn back in a series of operations.

Ronald Clarke, 30, of Newtown, Birmingham, and James McDavid, 28, of Frankley, West Midlands, deny causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Mr Jacobs. They also deny violent disorder. Lee Anderson, 25, of Rowley Regis, Birmingham and John Wilson, 25, of Northfield, Birmingham, deny violent disorder. The trial continues.

## Ex-principal returns missing art to Durham

BY PAUL WILKINSON

THE former principal of a university college who left after discrepancies were disclosed in his academic qualifications has returned a number of *objets d'art* to the college after a flurry of legal letters.

Lawyers wrote to the Rev Duane Wade-Hampton Arnold when staff at St Chad's at Durham could not find the pieces after his departure last month. They included a coral crucifix presented by its founder in 1904, which the college had valued at £40,000, a Georgian chest of drawers worth more than £1,000, at least one painting and a number of ornaments.

Last night Dr Arnold, who is now at the Concordia theological seminar in Fort Wayne, Indiana, said: "Some items were inadvertently taken by the removers. They have been returned. The matter is now closed."

However he and the college are disputing the ownership of the Georgian chest, which he insists is his. Oliver Hyams, his British solicitor, said he had bought it and taken it safe. He claimed that none had any great value. Of the other four items, one painting was found in Britain at the restorers and a second painting was found in the college.

"The container was packed by the removal men after he had left the country. Frankly he sees this all as a storm in a tea-cup," Mr Hyams said.

The college, which had approached Durham police to investigate the matter, has told the force it is dealing with the matter itself.



Arnold: said items had been taken by removers

Who's Who and other reference books proved to be bogus. He blamed clerical errors and a plot against him by academics who disapproved of his radical methods. He is taking the college and university to an industrial tribunal alleging constructive dismissal.

Mr Hyams said that the college had asked about 11 missing items. Dr Arnold had found seven when he unpacked the container of his effects in the US. Besides the crucifix and the desk there was a desk lamp, a letter rack, an ash tray, a tray and a small safe. He claimed that none had any great value. Of the other four items, one painting was found in Britain at the restorers and a second painting was found in the college.

"The container was packed by the removal men after he had left the country. Frankly he sees this all as a storm in a tea-cup," Mr Hyams said.

The college, which had approached Durham police to investigate the matter, has told the force it is dealing with the matter itself.

## Fireman's love of job drove him to arson

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A PART-TIME fireman has been detained for two years after admitting a series of arson attacks.

Matthew Whiting, 19, derived such excitement from fighting fires that he began to set them. The judge told him that his actions had let down his family, particularly his father, who had been a fireman for 35 years.

Edmund Walters, for the prosecution, told Reading Crown Court that Whiting had started the fires — causing damage of almost £30,000 — in the Hungerford area of Berkshire last summer. He had set fire to a stack of barley straw, bales of hay and a Dutch barn.

Whiting, of Hungerford, admitted four counts of arson and asked for a further arson charge to be taken into consideration. The court was told that he had been a retained firefighter at Hungerford Fire Station from 1994 until he resigned in 1996 after being arrested.

Paul Reid, for the defence, said: "Whiting's father was a long-serving fireman. His brother is a fireman. He wanted to become a fireman from a very young age. He loved the job. It's clear he loved the thrill of it... the rush of adrenalin when his bleeper went off... when he went to the station with the engines running, the lights flashing."

Judge Spence, said: "It was a total abuse of your trust as a firefighter, as a protector of society." He ordered Whiting to be detained for two years in a Young Offenders' Institution. No order for costs or compensation was made.



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JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

## Elton John steps lightly into sixth decade

BY EMMA WILKINS



John: will celebrate with 600 friends

THE centrepiece of a lavish fiftieth birthday party for Elton John tomorrow will be a display by a ballroom dancing team from South Wales. But there won't be a sequin in sight when the 16-strong Ystrad Fawr Formation Team takes to the floor at London's Hammersmith Palais because their manager regards spangles as "old hat".

The fancy dress party for 600 people has been organised under the strictest secrecy by the pop star's

management team. Phillip Perry was happy to discuss his troupe's routine but fell silent when pressed about whether John would join in. "I can tell you about the dancing, but I can't betray the trust of my client about any other details," he said.

The male dancers will be in tails and the women in fuchsia pink flowing dresses. "We won't have a single sequin. We regard all that as rather old hat. We don't go for glitter any more," Mr Perry said.

The purple and gold invita-

tions, embossed with a gold crest, invite guests for 6.30pm with carriages at 1am. The guest list is reported to include George Michael, Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall, Rod Stewart, Nanette Newman and Gianni Versace.

John, who celebrated his actual birthday on March 25 with a small party in Los Angeles, has already received an exclusive early present: honorary membership of the Royal Academy of Music, an accolade also given to Mendelssohn, Liszt and Richard Strauss.



# Greenwich denies its clock is second-best

**BY NIGEL HAWKE**  
SCIENCE EDITOR

easy-to-understand form than in the past."

One accountancy firm offering individuals help with the new forms is DBS Management, which will calculate an individual's tax bill for £75 a year. The service is available to employed (Schedule E) or retired taxpayers only.

Another is TAX etc, in London, which plans to set up new offices around the country later in the year. It offers an "off-the-street" one-hour assessment service, charging a flat fee of £100 where the tax affairs are relatively simple, and £150 for more complicated returns.

Ashley Deakin, a director

The curse of the millennium clocks has already struck in Dublin and Paris, where clocks designed to count down to 2000 have been withdrawn. But Greenwich shrugged off the charge that its clock is misleading because it takes no account of "leap seconds".

Andrew Ioffus of Accurist, which made the millennium clock, checking the time

pagne glasses at midnight on December 31, 1999. The Earth has been slowing, but it might speed up, said Dr Lippincott. Leap seconds are introduced to ensure that atomic clocks, which keep better time than the spinning Earth, do not get out of synchrony with it. Dr Lippincott also rebutted as pedantic charges that the observatory was celebrating the millennium too early.

Since there was no year zero, the true millennium will be in 2001 — by which time the planning permission granted by English Heritage to place the clock on the wall of the observatory at Greenwich will have run out.

"We'll have an even bigger party to usher in 2001," she quipped.

Richard Morrison, page 19

**TAXPAYERS** who go to seek help from the new one-stop shops would need to bring details of the following:

- ☐ salary
- ☐ rental income, in the case of landlords
- ☐ investment income, including share dividends
- ☐ interest from building so-

- ☐ income from overseas
- ☐ capital gains arising from assets bought and sold
- ☐ pension income.

They would also need to bring:

- ☐ P45 and P60 forms
- ☐ record of mortgage relief interest and other loans

"we knew there would be an opportunity for us. This venture will potentially make us money — we are not a charitable organisation. However, the service will be mutually beneficial, since it is possible that we can save taxpayers money."

**Weekend Money**, page 31

## Muggers' victim dies

A pensioner collapsed and died only hours after she was smuggled for her purse, containing £80, while out shopping. Edna Brown, 75, of Scarborough, North Yorkshire, suffered a heart attack as she recovered from the shock of the theft at home. Police said later that three local men had been arrested.

## Jaguar recall

Jaguar is to recall 4,766 of its new XK8 sports cars, including 805 sold in Britain, because of a possible fault. The Coventry company said there had been three minor incidents involving the rear suspension. No one was hurt.

## Rail crash trial

## Sound and Furey

A SOLICITOR who was sacked for spying her employer's trade secrets won her claim of sex discrimination yesterday. However, the industrial tribunal rejected Sheena Khan's case for unfair dismissal because she had falsified her curriculum vitae.

Miss Khan, 29, had rejected offers of romance from Robert Broudie, a criminal lawyer in Liverpool, but, when he continued to pester her, she recorded their conversations.

On one occasion she saw him standing outside her home peering through a window. When she let him in, he demanded she return half a cake which he had given her.

She said he had kissed her on the shoulder at the office Christmas party. His telephone calls to her home put her relationship with her boyfriend under pressure and they split seven months after

The tribunal in Liverpool rejected her claim of unfair dismissal when it was disclosed that her curriculum vitae said she had been awarded a 2:1 degree by Leicester University. She had a 2:2 from Leicester Polytechnic.

Mr Broudie, 48, brother of the Lightning Seeds singer Ian Broudie, is to appeal against the judgment, which his solicitors described as "perverse".

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# Lottery grants will buy pets for pensioners

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN

PENSIONERS and the infirm who need pets for companionship will soon be able to apply for lottery grants to buy, feed and care for them.

David Sieff, chairman of the National Lottery Charities Board, said yesterday that its aim was to help those at greatest disadvantage in society and to improve quality of life in the community. "The care and welfare of animals is also linked to the welfare of people, and so we want to support work with pets and other animals."

The grants for animals will be channelled through charities or local voluntary groups working with the elderly, the infirm or with animals. The money could also be used to help finance city farms, which give urban children a chance to get to know farmyard animals. A board spokesman said: "What we don't want is to simply give lottery money for animals which don't have any relation to helping people's lives. Pets are often very helpful for elderly people who

are lonely or for sick people who cannot get out."

Betty McBride, a spokeswoman for Help the Aged, welcomed the scheme. "If you are isolated, frail or lonely, having a pet can vastly improve the quality of your life. Caring for a pet can make you feel better about yourself. Although cats require less maintenance than dogs, a small dog was often a perfect pet for an elderly person, she said. "Keeping mobile is an essential part of growing older. It is one of those truisms that the more you get out, the fitter and healthier you will be. Having a small dog that you can take for a walk will increase your quality of life as well as keep the dog fit."

The RSPCA gave the plans a cautious welcome. A spokeswoman said: "Our concern would be that there was ongoing provision for the care of pets. The board will have to assess how people who get the grants are going to continue to pay for their animals for the rest of that animal's life. They

will also have to consider whether the grants will cover things such as pet insurance. We advise all pet owners to take out insurance so that they can pay for any medical treatment that their animal might need."

The cost of a dog or cat from an RSPCA rescue home varies from about £30 to £70. The cost of keeping a dog through out an average life of 12 years is £7,324. The cost of a cat over an average 13 years is £7,827.

The plans are part of the board's fifth round of grant giving, which will also provide cash for charities or voluntary organisations working with homeless people and for community projects aimed at improving the environment. A total of about £160 million will be available for the schemes, under the joint titles of Voluntary Sector Development and Improving People's Living Environment.

The board will accept applications from May 6 to September 5. The telephone number for applications is 0345 919191.

## Lost pup becomes dog of war

A STRAY puppy that crossed a minefield to join the Army has been officially enlisted with a name, rank, serial number and patrol duties.

Acting Gunner Hooch D.O.G. was spotted by troops from 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery, who are on duty in Cyprus. Lance Bombardier Mark Crane said: "It was a

cold day. We saw a wet, bedraggled lump of fur in the minefield next to our observation post. At first we thought the poor thing was dead, then it struggled to its feet and limped towards us, straight across the minefield. We went down to the wire and cheered when it crawled through."

The eight-week-old stray mongrel bitch had sores and

an injured leg and was taken to a vet for treatment. Bombardier Scott Dalton said: "We made a dogbed in a box that had contained drinks for our bar, so we called her Hooch."

Now fully recovered, the dog is staying with patrols keeping the peace between Greek Cypriot and Turkish forces in the United Nations buffer zone.



Baron von Richthofen and the man he didn't kill: Lieutenant Patrick Garnett's Royal Aero Club membership book

## Grandson downs Red Baron myth

BY ROBIN YOUNG

THE true story of a British pilot's death in a dogfight with the Red Baron has been uncovered after 80 years. Patrick Garnett was 22 when his Nieuport Scout biplane was shot down in March 1917.

Baron Manfred von Richthofen, the German air ace nicknamed the Red Baron, was so moved by his young foe's bravery that he wrote to Garnett's widow, Mary, whom he had married only ten weeks before, returning a scrap of her wedding dress which her husband had carried as a talisman, his gold cufflinks and binoculars.

For years Garnett's family believed he was one of the 80 airmen killed by von Richthofen, but now a descendant has pieced together the truth.

Garnett was returning from a morning patrol when he spotted two enemy Albatross aircraft. Without waiting for help, he broke away from his squadron and

attacked. Unluckily for him, the two all-red biplanes were from the baron's feared 11th Jasta (Pursuit) Squadron, flown by von Richthofen and Lieutenant Kurt Wolff. In the fierce dogfight which followed, Garnett was quickly outgunned and was shot down a mile behind the German lines.

His widow later married again, and her grandson, Mac Hawkins, 53, from Bridgwater, Somerset, has recently spent months re-

searching Garnett's death. He traced the German fighter squadron's records and found an entry for March 30, 1917: "One flight. Lieut Wolff successfully, at 11.45am near Fouquieres, this side of the lines, Nieuport DD one-seater, inmate Lieut Garnett killed."

Richthofen learnt of the dead man's recent marriage, because Garnett may have survived long enough to speak of it. "He obviously

admired Pat's courage and wrote to my grandmother expressing his condolences. She took that to mean that he personally shot Pat down, but now it seems not."

Mr Hawkins added: "Not surprisingly, she destroyed the letter. She thought this chap had killed her husband, after all." Lieutenant Wolff was killed in September 1917, with 33 kills to his credit.

A 12ft crucifix erected in memory of Garnett, at St Andrew's Church in Backwell, near Bristol, has been restored and rededicated. Mr Hawkins uncovered the memorial, which had become overgrown, while researching his book on Somerset at war, and the family paid for it to be restored.

At the rededication service on Easter Saturday, the anniversary of Garnett's death, a bugler from the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment, the modern equivalent of his regiment, played the *Last Post*. 80 years almost to the minute after he was killed.



Patrick and Mary Garnett on their wedding day

## Citizen's air force flies into the sunset

BY MICHAEL EVANS  
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE RAF Volunteer Reserve, which had more than half a million members during the Second World War, is to be disbanded today. After 60 years the VR, as it is known, is to be amalgamated with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Conceived in the mid-1930s by Marshal of the RAF Lord Tedder, the VR became a "citizen's air force". Clerks, students, teachers and engineers learnt to fly in the evening, after work, and at the weekend. By the time of the Battle of Britain in 1940, one in six of the RAF's officer corps came from the VR ranks. Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command, once said: "Thank God for the RAFVR."

The volunteers included Johnnie Johnson, who went on to become Britain's foremost fighter pilot, shooting down 38 German aircraft in the Second World War; he retired as an air vice-marshal.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon, Chief of the Air Staff, paid tribute to the work of the VR and its part in RAF history. He added: "It seems entirely right that for the future we should have one reserve, bringing with it greater flexibility in terms of how it might be deployed." The new combined force is set to double in size to more than 3,000 personnel.

At today's ceremony at RAF Cranwell, which will be led by the Duke of York, Flight Lieutenant Howard Chandler, a Boeing 747 pilot with British Airways, will be among those joining a flypast at the controls of a Hercules transport aircraft.

## Rejoice that the Church is human too

By John Hind

St Augustine wrote confidently of the Church: "We are the Easter people, and Alleluia is our song!" From the resurrection of Jesus, the Church emerged as God's sign and agent of the new life he wills for the entire world.

Despite the shortcomings of its members and some of the negative publicity the Church attracts, these days between Easter and Pentecost provide a particular focus for reflection on the nature and purpose of God's Easter people. It is important to keep emphasising the sense of new life and salvation at the heart of the Christian message, especially in the face of the cynical comment by a 19th-century critic that "Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, and what we got was the Church". It was meant as an insult but, like many similar gibes, was closer to the truth than the critic intended.

Over the centuries, there has been no shortage of people ready to draw attention to the contrast between the nobility of Jesus's message and the frequent failures of his followers, individually and corporately, to live up to it.

It is a saving grace that probably the larger number of critics are from within the Church. Even among unbelievers, the complaint is often not that the Church is Christian, but that it is not Christian enough. "Call yourselves Christians!" is one of the more polite forms of the complaint.

None of this should surprise us. Jesus himself, in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets before him, was sharply critical of the way in which the institutions of religion can deflect and distract people from God. Faced with this ever present danger, self-examination, repentance and a purpose of amendment of life are essential exercises for us all. We should not resent criticism of our lifestyle and our institutions. We should rather ask if there is any truth in the criticisms.

There is, however, a way of criticising the Church that suggests not just that Christians and their earthly institutions are fallible, but that the idea of embodying religion in institutions is somehow

wrong. "Institutional religion" has a bad name. "We live in an age in which institutions generally have a bad name. It is good that we are not as overawed by hierarchies, as in previous generations, and good that freedom of speech is welcomed, enabling hypocrisy to be exposed. But these goods can spill over into what has been called the "culture of contempt". We are in danger of considering cynicism a virtue.

The simple fact is that institutions will always be with us. They are part of the God-given way in which the world works. Because they work under human influences, they will be prone to distortion and sin. That does not invalidate them. Christians believe that this world is not only made and sustained by God, but that it is restored and renewed by him. The flesh, meaning our earthly life, in all its aspects, may be weak but it is still capable of being the bearer of divinity. Human beings can be redeemed, and so too can their institutions.

In Easter week, Christians celebrate not only the resurrection of Jesus Christ but also our own share in his resurrection.

The Church — God's Easter people — is precisely one way in which the message of the Kingdom of God is embodied. No human individual, philosophy or institution is perfect; but here in the Church, there is a community that shares completely in the ambiguities of earthly life but is at the same time one with the world to come.

God's Easter people rejoice that even institutions can rise again — and again. "Alleluia" they sing, as they love this strange, mixed body of saints and sinners, in which life is a constant struggle but the joy of Heaven is a present reality as well as a future hope.

This is a way of looking at life which is good news indeed, not for religious interest groups, but for people everywhere struggling to make sense of a world in which the highest treasures are contained in earthly vessels.

John Hind is Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe.

## Charity treasurer pocketed £109,000

BY A STAFF REPORTER

THE treasurer of a children's charity admitted yesterday to pocketing £109,000 from it over ten years. Charles Atkinson, 59, a bank clerk, pocketed cash donations to the Church of England Children's Society or forged cheques for cash.

Atkinson, of St Margaret's Bay, near Dover, Kent, admitted 12 thefts and one forgery between July 1986 and February 1996. He asked for a further 320 offences to be considered. Judge David Croft, QC, said: "This reflects years of deception and dishonesty, lying to your colleagues on the committee and cheating children."

Maidstone Crown Court

was told that Atkinson's wife, a retired teacher, and his two children had no idea what he was up to. There was no lavish lifestyle and their most luxurious holidays were driving down to the South of France to stay at a friend's cottage.

Atkinson told police he did not know where the money had gone and had used it simply to support his family. Sometimes he would pocket up to £5,000 a month, banking coins from the charity's collections but keeping the notes.

He had been made treasurer because he was a senior clerical assistant at NatWest Bank in Canterbury. The bank has since reimbursed the charity for the full loss.

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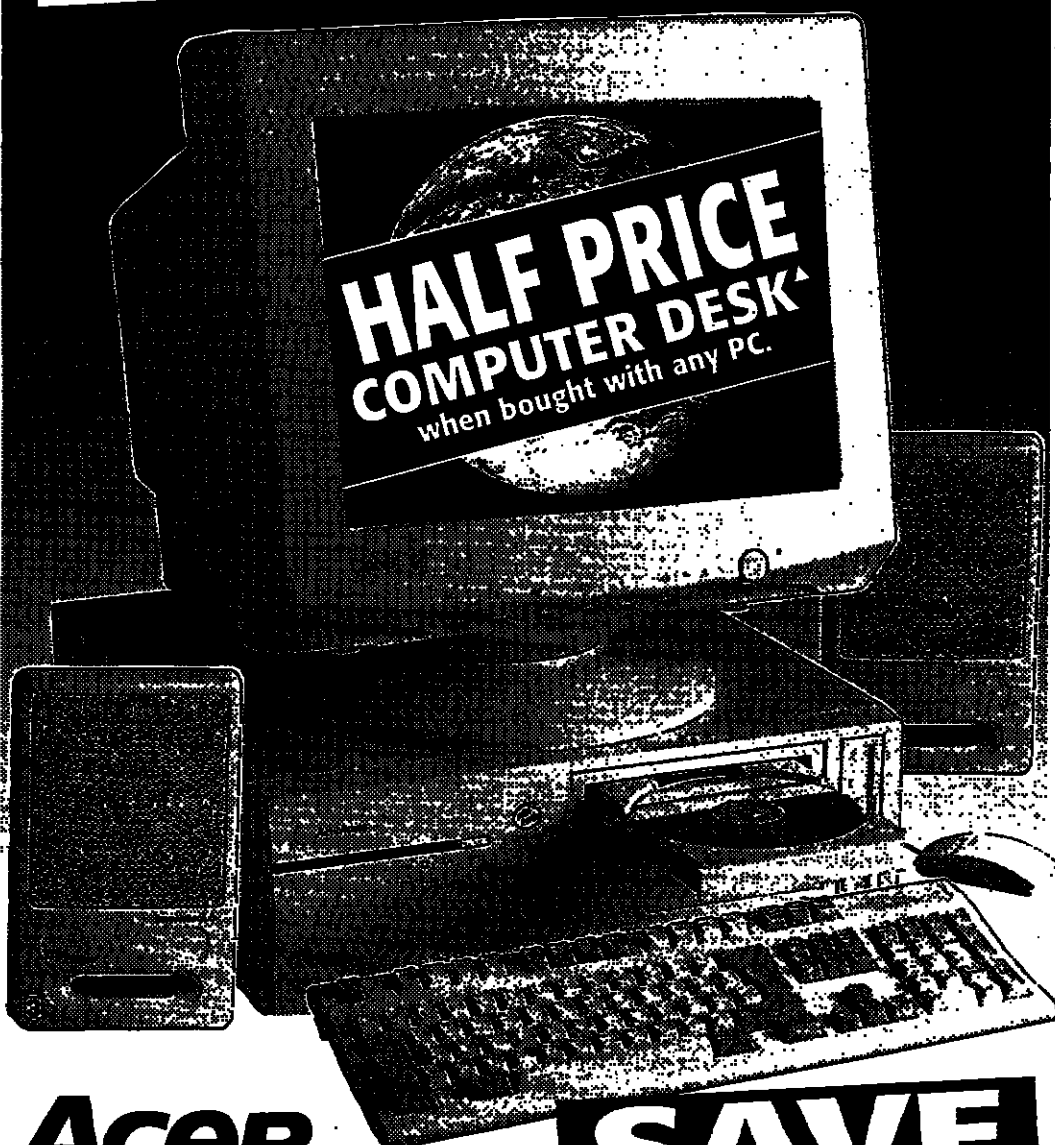
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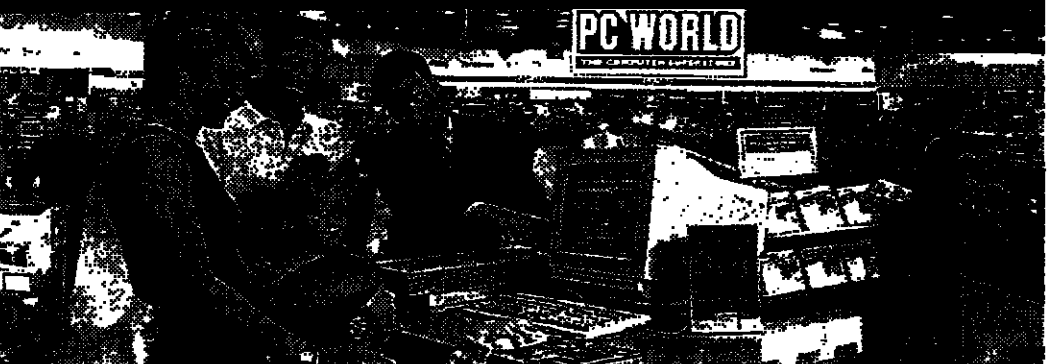
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## ELECTION 97

POLL DAY  
-26**'John Major dropped into the Bugle to hoist a pint of warm ale with the anglers'**

Charles Bremner - page 14



- Lib Dems leap where Labour fears to tread Peter Riddell - p13
- Cherie Blair wins legal personality of the year award - p14
- Who spent most in the poster war? - p 12

**The dishonest agents guide to cheating at election expenses**

Details - page 15

## Searching out the true colours

JOE KLEIN sat looking at a new cast of characters yesterday, trying to work out the plot. One thing seemed certain. If the issue of tax in Scotland was the toughest question to be faced by Tony Blair, then there seemed little material for another best-selling novel on the scandalous intrigue behind modern politics.

Mr Klein is the American journalist who turned Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign into the novel *Primary Colors*, going behind the scenes on the election trail as aides struggled with their personal morality while trying to keep the sleazebag issues off the agenda. Mr Klein is now the only foreign journalist to gain accreditation for the Blair campaign bus.

Yesterday he had his first taste of the Blair campaign with the colourful spectacle of the Scottish press, red in tooth and claw, giving the Labour leader a severe grilling over devolution. As the candidate gave identical answers to the same questions, as if caught in



**Ben Macintyre watches as an author finds the gap between American and British politics is like that between fact and fiction - a little narrower every day**

an endless argumentative loop, the American writer professed some bafflement as to what, precisely, was going on.

"He just won't mention the possibility of a raise in taxes. Right?" Mr Klein wondered, as the press conference on Labour's Scottish manifesto drew to an ill-tempered close.

Mr Klein, now on assignment for *New Yorker* magazine, was a senior political correspondent for *Newsweek* when, under the name "Anonymous", he published *Primary Colors*, initially denying he was the author. It is to be made into a film starring John Travolta and Kristin Scott Thomas as the candidate and

his wife. Yesterday Mr Klein said he thought it unlikely that his experiences on the Labour campaign trail would form the basis for another novel, although he added wryly: "I'm not going to foreclose on anything."

First, however, he had to sort out the cast of British characters: "Who's that?" Mr Klein asked, as Alistair Campbell, Mr Blair's press secretary offered the day's spin. That, it was explained, is Labour's taller answer to George Stephanopoulos, the pin-up wunderkind of the Democrats' 1992 campaign and believed to be the model for the main protagonist in *Primary Colors*.

The careful Blair campaign could be etched only in more muted and undramatic tones. While Mr Blair was forced into some fancy footwork on the West Lothian question, he is no John Travolta.

The last time I met Mr Klein was on a campaign swing with Mr Clinton through the state of Georgia, at an event which involved two brass bands, an open-air stadium, massed ranks of cheerleaders and thousands of balloons. The Blair campaign found itself yesterday afternoon at the Kingsgrove community hall in Staffordshire. This featured one working lavatory, several gallons of strong tea, and 400 locals in a question and an-



Tony Blair in action on the Scottish question yesterday: some fancy moves, but at least he will never be played by John Travolta

swer session with Mr Blair. But while the setting may have been very different, the Blair '97 campaign clearly shows the influence of two successive Democrat campaigns, including slick media handling, snappy sloganeering and an emphasis on carefully coordi-

nated and photo-friendly people-contact.

The Staffordshire "town meeting" was the sort of set-piece event Clinton employed to great effect: the first-name terms, the earnest sincerity, the overwhelmingly enthusiastic audience and the buzz-

words - "trust", "hope" - were all leaves taken from the Clinton book.

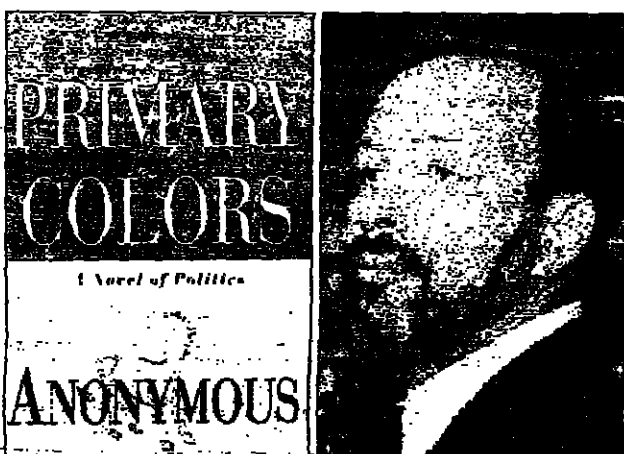
The Victoria Hall in Kingsgrove was specifically selected to contrast with what the Labour spinners declared would be the "glitz and triumphalism" of John Ma-

jor's rally at the Albert Hall in London.

As the latest round of low-calibre chicken jokes was exchanged between the waiting journalists, Mr Klein pointed out that this was another idea that had travelled the Atlantic to enter the British election

campaign. He asked: "Is this the first time you've had animals?"

"It's nice to be here for a breakthrough. You should have been with us in Missouri in 1988. An entire barnyard menagerie turned up to confront Michael Dukakis."

The bestseller and the man who initially denied that he wrote it: *Primary Colors* and Joe Klein

## Blair puts Scottish backs up in rush to reassure English

Tony Blair and Stephen Dorrell are rather similar: mid-forties, Oxford-educated, politically ambitious, formed by Westminster and muddled on Scotland.

Neither seems able to understand that what matters when speaking to the Scots is not what you say, but how you say it. Both made the mistake of assuming that, whatever power may be devolved to Scotland, Westminster will always have the right to revoke it. Whatever logic they thought they were demonstrating, both were guilty of political ineptitude.

Mr Dorrell stated last February that a future Tory government could always abolish a Scottish parliament. Mr Blair said that whatever a Scottish parliament decided, ultimate sovereignty would rest with him as an English MP. Even Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, does not believe that Mr Blair's remarks were at best ill-judged, at worst simply wrong. Devolving power to Scotland means just that - giving it power that cannot simply be removed by a vote in Westminster.

The Claim of Right document, signed by Labour as one of the partners of the Scottish Constitutional Con-

vention, acknowledges as its central thesis "the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs". It adds that, in all its actions, "their needs shall be paramount".

Most of the convention's deliberations have been aimed at defining the best way of enshrining that right. To erode it by playing around with words at this stage, as Mr Blair did yesterday, is to risk Labour's credibility on the one issue in Scotland on which they should be unequivocal. This, he should have realised, is thoroughly dangerous territory.

It is a measure of their collective misjudgment that both Mr Dorrell and Mr Blair chose a Scottish newspaper to voice views that were intended for English ears. Mr Blair is concerned to reassure his English candidates that nothing in Labour's devolution plans will undermine the Parliament to which they hope to be elected. He went out of his way to state that whatever plans a Scottish parliament might put forward, ultimate sovereignty would reside with Westminster.

That statement is constitutionally correct and, if he had stopped there, no damage would have been done. Not



MAGNUS LINKLATER

even the convention is proposing a federal solution in which the two parliaments in London and Edinburgh would have equal status. But at the same time it is vital that those rights Westminster does cede to Scotland should be enshrined, and that includes Labour's tax-varying powers. Try as he might, Mr Blair cannot pretend on the one hand that he is giving Scotland real power to control its own affairs and on the other that it can always be revoked.

Equally, his choice of words could not have been worse. To say that sovereignty rests "with me as an English MP" is to suggest an authoritarian attitude that Scottish voters

will immediately associate with Baroness Thatcher's *de haut en bas* pronouncements that used regularly to get up their noses. And to say, as he did, that the right to raise income tax is no more than that held by an English parish council - which is technically true - is simply condescending and insulting.

How great then is the damage? Not fundamental, perhaps, but certainly destabilising to Labour's campaign in Scotland. It will reinforce the widely perceived notion that Mr Blair is unconvinced about the wisdom of devolution and that he is more concerned with his English voters.

Perhaps more important, it runs directly counter to his repeated entreaty yesterday: trust me. That trust had already been undermined by Labour's decision to hold a two-question referendum on devolution rather than simply introduce legislation for a Scottish parliament once elected. This latest gaffe will give further ammunition, not just to the other parties in Scotland, but to those hitherto silenced members of the old Labour Party in Scotland who may well conclude that new Labour is having second thoughts about its flagship policy.

## The Stamina Factor

John Major: 54

Freshness rating: ★★★★★

Miles travelled this week: 820

Hours spent campaigning on the streets: 7½

Interviews: Average 10 per day

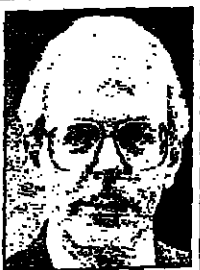
Press conferences: 3

Manifesto launches: 1

Average working day: 18 hours

Worst moment:

Nearly losing his temper with John Humphreys of Today when repeatedly questioned about sleaze on Wednesday



Tony Blair: 43

Freshness rating: ★★★★★

Miles travelled this week: 2000

Hours spent campaigning on the streets: 7

Interviews: Average 10 per day

Press conferences: 4

Manifesto launches: 2

Average working day: 12 hours

Worst moment:

Facing the Scottish press yesterday after comparing a devolved Scottish parliament to a parish council



Paddy Ashdown: 56

Freshness rating: ★★★★★

Miles travelled this week: 1453

Hours spent campaigning on the streets: 10½

Interviews: Average 10 per day

Press conferences: 3

Manifesto launches: 1

Average working day: 16½ hours

Worst moment:

Finding his manifesto contradicted itself on tax yesterday

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## Norma's husband fishes for votes by the river

When John Major sought a quiet pint in a waterside pub, Charles Bremner and the world's media just happened to be there



THERE was no cricket match in sight but eternal England was on show yesterday when John Major dropped into the Bugle pub on the Hamble to hoist a pint of warm ale with the anglers.

Through the window of the 12th-century pub, beyond the BMWs and Volvos on the old car park, a forest of masts on the river testified to the age-old pursuits of the English. Just the backdrop for a day of messing about near boats, setting course for the future and pursuing the floating voter. Inside the Bugle, packed with "yachties", the media and security men, the Prime Minister was the compleat man-in-the-pub when he dropped in to surprise the locals.

Letting his double-breasted suit flap open and manfully eschewing the tankard's handle, the former Briton lad sipped his Bass only a little too delicately as he lent a sympathetic ear to the fears of his fishermen friends: that despite Labour's backing away this week from giving parliamentary time to banning fox-hunting, a Blair government would eventually

move from foxes to fish and rob them of their sport.

No, the fishing lobby had not formally teamed up with the hunters, but "it's only a short step from fox-hunting to other things," said Jerry Hall, the angler-in-chief. Mr Major assured them of the Tories' love of their sport and invited them to visit his Huntingdonshire fishpond — without their rods.

Mr Hall, it transpired, was also a local Conservative activist, whose aid had been solicited by Central Office in a day that offered a textbook case of the manufactured media opportunity that has become the hallmark of Campaign 1997.

Mr Major's unannounced descent by Boeing 737 on the picturesque mecca of yachting

was hardly a hard day on the hustings, even though Mrs Major's handlers, one wearing a badge proclaiming "Re-elect Norma's Husband", fretted that their lady had been upset by the scrum of media that crowded the lane.

But there was a point to the outing. The Hamble falls in Hampshire's Eastleigh constituency, lost by the Tories to the Liberal Democrats after the death of Stephen Milligan in 1994. If the Conservatives are to have any hope, they must win back such traditionally true-blue seats.

Standing windswept on the quayside, halyards clinking on masts behind him, Mr Major implicitly recognised the struggle he faces with the floating voter. The polls were rubbish, he insisted. "The

don't-knows are Conservatives who are waiting for the right reason to come home to the Conservative Party... I expect that they will need a bit of wooing but I think and hope that they will come home and that we will win the election."

Few yacht owners were there to hear the Prime Minister's thoughts because it was only Friday lunchtime and they are mostly what the locals know as DFTs, or Down From Towners.

The diffidence and civility of his nautical jaunt was too much for one American correspondent observing the gentler English art of campaigning. "What is this all about?" he wondered. "This is a totally substance-free day and I paid £520 for it."

The big parties' practice of hitting journalists with some of the world's steepest charges for media access and travel is prompting signs of mutiny from foreign news people. "They started at £570 for the day," grumbled Patrice de Beer, Le Monde's London correspondent. "We had to haggle to get it down to this extortionate level."



Seeking five more years before the mast: Mr and Mrs Major on the Hamble

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## Thatcher meeting to boost morale

By Andrew Pierce

JOHN MAJOR and Baroness Thatcher will speak on the same platform tomorrow for the first time since the last general election.

At a rally of candidates at Conservative Central Office, the Prime Minister by her side, Lady Thatcher will forcefully attack Labour, in a rare show of solidarity with her successor. The appearance of unity will conceal tensions at Central Office over the role of Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, who has been virtually sidelined from the media campaign. With the Tories still way behind Labour in the opinion polls, the joint appear-

## Hospital chiefs face sack in red tape blitz

By Jill Sherman

HEALTH authority chiefs will face heavy financial penalties and could be sacked under a Labour government if they fail to cut down on bureaucratic waste, Tony Blair will announce today.

Mr Blair will use his adoption speech at Sedgfield to present a new scheme to crack down on unnecessary paperwork and administration in NHS trusts to save money for patient care. League tables would be set up to show which of the 450 NHS trusts in Britain are the most efficient.

All hospitals would be expected to improve their standards to match the best 25 per

### THE TORY CAMPAIGN

ance by the two will provide a much-needed morale boost for the Tory campaign team.

One of Lady Thatcher's supporters said last night: "She is absolutely on side. She is absolutely committed to a Conservative victory. If we were to lose there is no way she wants to be exposed to criticism that her conduct was a contributory factor."

Friends of Dr Mawhinney have complained that he has been overshadowed in the campaign by Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke. Dr Mawhinney has been virtually consigned to a backroom role and to regional tours.

Apart from at Wednesday's launch of the manifesto, he has rarely been seen or heard. He had agreed before the campaign to a downgrading of his media role because of a perception that he is less effective than the Deputy Prime Minister. But he is becoming restless that other Cabinet figures have been making more of the running. His exclusion has led to reports of tension in the Tories' communications department.

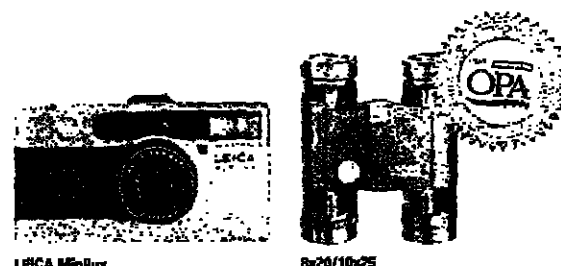
### LABOUR CAMPAIGN

cent. Those that failed would be visited by hit squads who would carry out quality audits to investigate where administrative and management costs could be reduced.

If the hospital refused to implement these recommendations, the chief executive would lose the performance related element of his pay. Chief executives can earn more than £100,000, of which more than 10 per cent can be in performance bonuses. If this penalty was also ignored, the chairman and/or the non-executive members of the trust, who are appointed by the Secretary of State, could be dismissed.

Mr Blair has already pledged to save £100 million from administrative waste. But today he will make clear that he has far bigger savings in mind, with plans to appoint a new independent "bureaucracy buster" to look at management costs within the NHS. This role, answerable to the Health Secretary, would involve identifying waste and drawing up guidelines for hospitals.

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# Women rivals sharpen their claws

Daniel McGrory witnesses insults flying as the battle for Peterborough gets off to a hostile start

AFTER the mock battles between chickens it was a day for genuine confrontation as the rival women of Peterborough bared claws and traded insults on a street corner.

By unhappy coincidence the Conservative candidate Jacqueline Foster and her Labour opponent, Helen Brinton, chose the same time to visit the anniversary celebrations of a community association held in the impossibly crowded front room of a terraced house in the constituency.

Guests were elbowing aside as both women expertly pirouetted in the confined space to ensure they did not have to shake hands, exchange pleasantries nor be photographed together watched over by the city's mayor.

Labour likes to portray Miss Foster, 45, a British Airways stewardess, as trained to calm the nervous traveller — in this case Peterborough's runaway MP Brian Mawhinney, the Tory chairman who they accuse of fleeing to a safe seat in next door Cambridge.

"Brian Mawhinney is the biggest chicken in the coop. He has done Labour a huge favour by sending a message that Peterborough is unwinnable for his party so Miss Foster has been sent to hold his hand," Miss Brinton said. The formidable Miss Foster retaliated that her opponent is a "hypocrite as she gets paid as a teacher at a grant-



Jacqueline Foster, left, the Tory candidate, and her Labour rival Helen Brinton at the constituency yesterday

maintained school and her lot wants to abolish them."

The rivals' next exchange was over their commitment to the city with Miss Foster pointing out she has at least lived in Peterborough long enough to appear on the electoral roll unlike her oppo-

nent, who she says "lives in Kent and has only just rented a flat for the duration of this campaign". She added: "There is no love lost between us. I do not respect her. She just mouths what Tony Blair tells her to. If she wants to debate me I will go anywhere, any

time, any place." Unashamedly, she describes Baroness Thatcher as "my absolute political role model" and admits: "I have always been tough. I tried 23 constituencies before I got this place. I am a divorcee with no children which some Tory as-

sociations do not care for. I am not bitter about that but then I have never been politically correct. What I am though is the best man for this job. "I do not need to be told how to dress or how to act like those Labour lady clones, Tony's Spice Girls." She in-

sists her choice of outfit — a well-cut two-piece blue suit — is her normally preferred style. "I always like to be neat and smart."

Apart from a spell living abroad she has been a stewardess since 1971 and warns she will "do damage" to anyone who makes sneering remarks about her being a "trollily dolly".

Her combative streak is needed if the Conservatives are to hold onto this city after boundary changes left the Tories with a notional majority of under 6,000 and a council that recently went to Labour with an 18 per cent swing.

Labour has already had two Cabinet ministers drop into Peterborough this week which is testament to how much effort they are putting in to win this constituency.

Ms Brinton, a 42-year-old mother of two, said as she swept off from the Gladstone Road Association. "The Tories are so scared all they can do is throw insults."

Miss Foster's reply was predictably swift and venomous. "I debate issues and all she does is read a script but if she wants this to be ugly so be it. She will not win."

Mohammad Choudhary, the Mayor, watching this shook his head and said: "I think we are in for a real scrap. I like both ladies though I am a Labour councillor, but may the best man win."

## THE CAMPAIGN IN SCOTLAND

### Why the press is reluctant to rave for Blair



Tony Blair discovers few allies and fierce independence in a Scottish press leaning towards nationalism, says Michael Gove

TONY BLAIR discovered yesterday that the Scottish press is no friend of his, nor should it be expected to be after his derogatory off-the-cuff remark about Scottish journalists last year.

But there is another reason for the Scottish press's suspicion of Mr Blair. The Scottish media has grown more autonomous from London in recent years, just as Mr Blair has reduced the independence of the Scottish Labour Party by having activists who take a different line removed from its executive and having Scottish candidates selected in London.

Since the decision by *The Sun* to publish a full Scottish edition, newspapers north of the border have striven harder to show their own Scottish colours. Both the *Mail* and the *Express* have increased their Scottish staff and editorial content, as has *The Times*. In response, the papers previously closest to the Scottish grain, Edinburgh's *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, and the *Daily Record*, have had to fight harder to assert their distinctiveness. *The Scotsman* and the *Herald* have responded by taking a more detached line towards new Labour even as England seems to embrace Mr Blair's party.

The *Herald* has positioned itself to the left of new Labour, and its editorial yesterday was sniffy about Mr Blair locating himself in the "radical centre" of politics, concluding that "Labour's manifesto may well deserve to win an election but whether it will win the longer-term affection of the British people is quite a different matter."

The *Scotsman*, with Andrew Neil as its Editor-in-

Chief, now occupies a space which is still on the left but at a critical distance from new Labour. Since taking over, Neil has laid into Labour's devolution plans, arguing in the words of yesterday's editorial, that "the fact that devolution is a good idea does not mean that every devolution scheme is without blemish. Labour persists in offering a flawed scheme — and one that could still easily be repaired — and it still refuses to answer the West Lothian question. Are we supposed to applaud?"

On the opposing page, *The Scotsman's* main political commentator, Ian McWhirter, continues the assault, arguing: "Even when we look at Labour's specific deliverable promises we find that, where they are not banal, they come apart."

Even on newspapers committed to new Labour, there is resistance. Many on the Scottish *Sun*, which bore a front-page endorsement of Mr Blair yesterday, were reluctant recruits. The paper was a cheer leader for the Scottish National Party from January, 1992, until the day after the English *Sun* shone on Blair. Even now, some of its staffers prefer nationalism to new Labour.

Its main rival, *The Daily Record*, has always been loyal to Labour, but preferred yesterday to lead on a scratch-card winner's good fortune than Labour's historic manifesto.

Most of Scotland's newspapers will still probably back Mr Blair come polling day, partly in order to secure the separate Parliament so many of them support. But if he disappoints in Downing Street, they will be back to give him going over.

### Pact is still on, say Lib Dems

BY MAGNUS LINKLATER

TONY BLAIR was accused yesterday of undermining the agreement between Labour and Liberal Democrats in Scotland over the creation of a Scottish parliament.

Launching the Liberal Democrat manifesto in Edinburgh, Jim Wallace, the party's Scottish leader, said there was a basic contradiction between the *claim of right* document that both parties had signed in the Scottish Constitutional Convention and remarks by Mr Blair published in *The Scotsman* yesterday.

"Mr Blair seems to be departing from the line that I thought Labour MPs had signed up to when they signed the *claim of right*," Mr Wallace said. He stopped short, however, of saying that Mr Blair had destroyed the pact between

the two parties over a Scottish parliament. It remained real and not a sham partnership, he said. But there did seem to be a difference in emphasis. The Liberal Democrats had a "gut belief" in the parliament, which was not shared by new Labour.

This underlined the importance of electing "large numbers" of Liberal Democrats to Westminster. He said their manifesto was the only one "carefully thought out and fully costed" and it would make a real difference to the future of Scotland. The party intended to invest £1 billion in Scottish education by the year 2002, providing pre-school education for all three and four-year-olds and reducing the size of all primary classes to below 30.

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# Ashdown plays honesty card with 'tax and spend' proposals

Jill Sherman and Polly Newton report on the Liberal Democrat manifesto

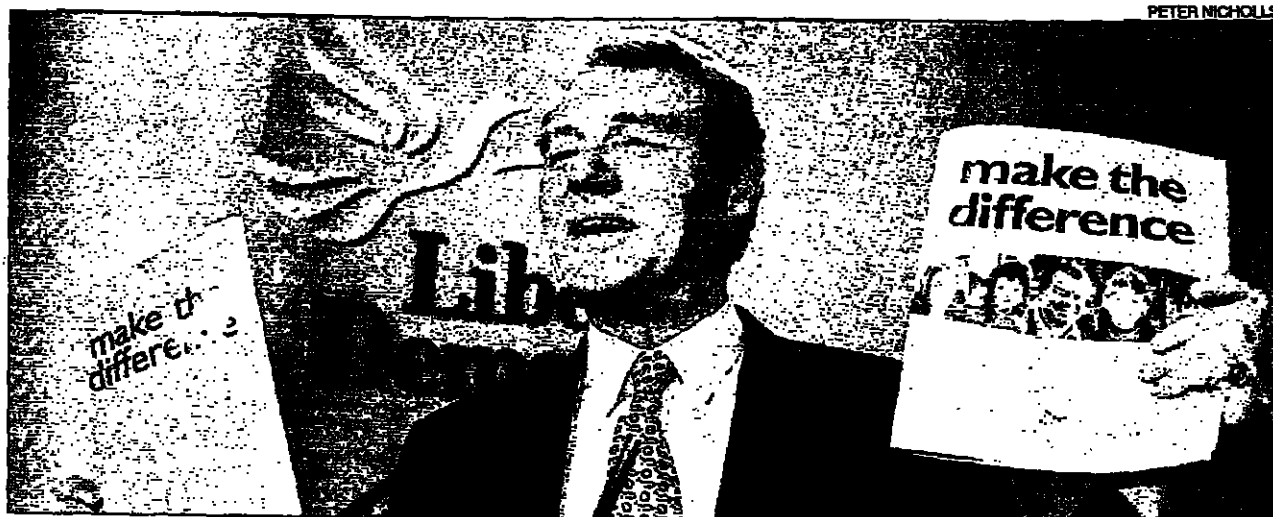
THE Liberal Democrat manifesto, published yesterday, is the most radical of the party documents produced this week, with an ambitious programme of increased public spending, funded in part by an increase of 1p in the basic rate of income tax.

Presenting his party's manifesto, the Liberal Democrat leader claimed that only his party was bold enough to admit that public services could not be improved unless taxes went up. He promised 10,000 extra nurses, 3,000 extra policemen, £2 billion more spent on education, free eye and dental checks and shorter hospital waiting lists.

"We've got to break the fatalism in our politics. We've got to get this country's 'can-do' spirit back, and there is nothing we cannot achieve," he said.

The Liberal Democrats say that education is their top priority. The age from which local authorities are required to provide schooling would be reduced from five down to three, although attendance at nursery school from three years old would not be compulsory. No child between five and 11 would need to be in a class of more than 30 pupils. There would be extra spending on school books and equipment and on the repair of school buildings.

But soon after the manifesto was published, there was confusion over how much extra tax people would have to pay.



Paddy Ashdown yesterday, delivering his message that a Liberal Democrat vote was not a wasted vote.

The document claims that its proposals would cost taxpayers an average of only 45p per week, a point immediately disputed by the Tories. But Mr Ashdown later admitted that the average earner on £19,000 a week would pay nearer £1.23 a week, and higher earners would pay much more.

Mr Ashdown also had difficulty explaining why one section of his party's document suggests that there will be tax cuts for 95.5 per cent of income taxpayers, which appears to contradict other sections.

Under the overall tax changes, those earning more than £100,000 would face a new top rate of tax of 50p. The basic rate of tax would also go up by a penny from 23p to 24p.

to meet the increased spending on education.

But the party also intends to take 500,000 low earners out of income tax by raising tax thresholds by £200 to £4,245. This would be paid for by the new 50p tax rate for high

age taxpayer would pay an extra £2.40 a week.

There was also confusion over the party's plans to phase out National Insurance contributions, as part of pension reforms. Alan Beith, the deputy leader, said: "We will start

The Liberal Democrat manifesto will appear in full on Monday

earners. Mr Ashdown later said that while those earning less than £12,000 would pay less tax, those earning more than £12,000 would pay more. Someone on £38,000 a year would pay an additional £2.70 in tax each week.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, claimed that the aver-

age taxpayer would pay an extra £2.40 a week. There was also confusion over the party's plans to phase out National Insurance contributions, as part of pension reforms. Alan Beith, the deputy leader, said: "We will start

ance charges were combined with income tax.

The document includes pledges to increase annual spending on health by £65 million and pensions by £265 million a year. It proposes to put 5p on a packet of cigarettes to pay for the restoration of free eye and dental checks and to freeze prescription charges.

Mr Ashdown said a Liberal Democrat vote was "not a wasted vote if you want more investment in your kid's school, if you want more investment to solve the crisis in the hospitals. A Liberal Democrat vote is the only vote you have got."

Leading article, page 21

## Lib Dems leap in where Labour fears to tread

The Liberal Democrat manifesto, *Make the Difference*, is something completely different, as John Clee, a prominent supporter, might have said. But then the party is not playing the same electoral game as the Tories or Labour.

It is not competing for national power, but rather seeking influence by aiming for a few dozen, mainly Tory-held, seats. The question raised by yesterday's manifesto is whether a self-consciously radical, bold programme peppered with commitments to initiatives everywhere is the right way to win over disillusioned Tories.

Where "new" Labour is afraid to tread, Paddy Ashdown delights in leaping. He is not afraid to talk about the need to raise taxes to pay for smaller classes, new books and equipment for schools, nursery education for three and four-year-olds, and reduced health service waiting lists and more doctors and nurses. This candour is refreshing compared with the evasions of the other parties. But its appeal is likely to be limited, though not quite as small as the cynics suggest.

Parents are alarmed at the cutbacks in schools, teachers being laid off and the fund-raising drives for new equipment. Some people may be prepared to pay a little more in tax for better public services. This ties in with the Liberal Democrats' parallel campaign for the forgotten



PETER RIDDELL

elections on May 1, those outside London and the big cities for control of the county councils.

The danger with such costly programmes, as Labour found five years ago, is that everyone can pick apart the details: how many will pay more in tax, and how much? Who will benefit? Mr Ashdown and his colleagues had an uncomfortable few minutes yesterday giving answers — which explains why Gordon Brown has been so critical of the Liberal Democrat stance and avoided such promises himself.

The risk for the Liberal Democrats has always been that they will be squeezed by Labour's strength and move to the centre. The continued high Labour ratings in the polls have led to a shift in the Liberal Democrats' strategy. There is no longer any talk of what might happen in a

hung parliament, and the issue of electoral reform was not exactly being highlighted yesterday.

The party has been distancing itself from Labour, and from any hint of post-election deals, emphasising its distinctive approach and contrast with Labour's caution. If, by late April, Labour looks as if it is heading for a landslide, we will probably hear more about the need for an independent party pressing for better schools and so on.

The party needs to retain national visibility to reinforce its regional activities, but it is not yet making headway in the national polls, being stuck around 11 to 14 per cent. Party strategists argue that this is no guide to their core 50 target seats where they are running strongly and, more to the point, a majority believe the Liberal Democrats are the main challenger.

On this view, the Tories are so weak that it does not matter that Labour is currently ten points or so ahead of its 1992 share in these seats. This is a fine balance. The Liberal Democrats cannot afford too strong a showing by Labour in these seats, or else Tory candidates will squeak back in on a lower share of the vote. The party cannot just fight a local and regional campaign. It needs to remain in the national picture. Yesterday's manifesto launch shows how hard it is for the Liberal Democrats to be both radical and credible.

## Leaders' apologies cannot hide their delight at being squeezed



MATTHEW PARRIS

PADDY ASHDOWN has hit on a foolproof way of packing Liberal Democrat meetings: hire a small hall. At Church House near Westminster yesterday, in a room probably more modest than the dining room of his campaign supremo, Lord Holme of Cheltenham, a few score journalists jostled with Lord Holme's ego for space in which to breathe.

"I am sorry it's so crowded," drawled the noble lord in accents which suggested that even his broom cupboard was bigger. "Thanks for coming," the ever-meaty Paddy Ashdown said. "Sorry we're over-crowded." His grin showed that he was not sorry. On

one wall Archbishop Cosmo Lang glared from his oil painting as a microphone on a pole teetered perilously close to his Most Reverend nose, the nuke's beaver tottering below.

Mr Ashdown spoke, his eyes driven by passion and grit into steely slits. A summary of his words, with bullet-points, was projected onto granite behind him. It was only screen granite. The impression was of receiving a poor man's version of the Ten Commandments from a poor man's version of Moses. Once enunciated, each covenant on the screen degraded — broke up in a computer-simulated snowstorm — and disappeared. Perhaps we were

being prepared for the real world, post-May 1, and the politicians' golden calves.

There were questions. Andrew Ramsley of *A Week In Politics* pointed out that Mr Ashdown had promised to raise income tax, and Mr Blair had promised not to, and both had promised to co-operate. Whose promise, then, was he promising to see broken? Mr Ashdown said it depended on how many votes he got.

The impression was confusing. Confusion deepened when Anthony Bevin of *The Independent* said: "Turn to page 49 of your manifesto. Look at it because it's rubbish." Everyone scrambled for the page.

Bevin and Ashdown squabbled about what seemed to be the implication on the page that taxes would go down when on other pages Ashdown had said that they would go up. Bevin demanded a reprint.

"Ah," Ashdown's helpful deputy interrupted, "but now turn to page 61." Everyone did so. Here, said Alan Beith, it explained that although the measures on page 49 brought taxes down, the measures on page 61 brought them up again. Ah!

Confusion deepened further when *The Guardian's* Michael White said that a Liberal Democrat advertisement in *New Statesman & Society*

claimed that taxes would rise by as much as £6 per week. "That was a misprint," Lord Holme said. "And not even a *Guardian* misprint," the owlish Beith chuckled.

The whole occasion was taking on an *Alice in Wonderland* quality. Had the Tory chicken, the *Mirror* fox, the two placard-carrying bears and the South African rhinoceros now swung from the ceiling on trapezes, to add their own ironic comment on the trivialisation of politics, few would have raised an eyebrow. Archbishop Lang stared stonily from his frame.

On Wednesday, John Major unveiled a manifesto which, though not devoid of ideas, breathes cau-

tion. His whole campaign insinuates a single theme: "So far so good: don't risk change." On Thursday, Labour's communications teamsters took us aside before their manifesto launch to remind us that there was nothing novel or interesting at all in the document. Tony Blair actually said — or implied — it was all old hat.

To calm me before the launch of his own party's plans, the Liberal Democrat MEP Graham Watson took me aside to tell me: "There's nothing new in them."

All three parties creep around, whispering into every anxious ear: "Don't worry: we have nothing to say." They crouch to conquer.

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# Cherie Booth named legal personality of the year

By RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

CHERIE BOOTH broke off campaigning with her husband in Scotland yesterday after learning she had been named Legal Personality of the Year. Tony Blair's wife travelled to London to receive the award last night.

She was named the winner after lawyers throughout Britain had voted in a contest organised by *The Lawyer* newspaper. Mark Wyatt, the paper's publisher, said Ms Booth had won by a "substantial margin".

However, he refused to disclose any voting figures or

Booth only got so many." He said that Ms Booth, who became a QC two years ago, had won the award, a foot square bronze and brass plaque, by an "overwhelming margin". She had deserved the award because she was "juggling career with a very public profile and trying to bring up a family. She is a very good role model."

Suspensions about the voting were fuelled when staff at the weekly paper, which Mr Wyatt said sold 18,500 copies, disclosed that it had been inundated with votes and that the response from the legal profession had been bigger than in previous years.

Mr Wyatt said he did not think the competition had been rigged and that Ms Booth was a very popular figure who had had a high profile throughout the year. "Lawyers are very honourable people. There would be no skulduggery by any people involved, at least I hope not," he said.

Mr Wyatt was not even able to disclose the number of people nominated for the award. However, he said the list had included Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, Lord Bingham of Cornhill, the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, Michael Beloff, joint head of the chambers where Ms Booth works, Dame Barbara Mills, Director of Public Prosecutions, Anthony Julius, the solicitor who acted for Diana, Princess of Wales, during her divorce, and Lord Irvine of Lairg, a close friend of Ms Booth and her husband.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill, the civil liberties lawyer, said he knew nothing about the competition. When told he had been nominated, he said: "Really! I can only assume it was an April Fool. I am amazed I was nominated."



Booth received award from a trade paper

## THE LAWYER

who was the runner-up in the competition, which was first held three years ago. The previous winners were Lord Woolf, the Master of the Rolls, and Martin Mears, the former President of the Law Society.

Mr Wyatt said: "We have never given figures. It is not a stitch-up, but giving figures gets very complicated and very embarrassing for the people nominated. It would become a story that Lord Mackay got this number of nominations or that Cherie



Facing the future: Mr Prescott helps James Bell, 4, from Cardiff, to recreate his pose with Tony Blair in the Labour Party manifesto

# Labour's Welsh dragon comes home

Valerie Elliott joins a glum John Prescott on his manifesto launch in Cardiff

WHEN John Prescott appeared in Cardiff yesterday to launch Labour's Welsh manifesto, it seemed a less-than-happy homecoming for a son of Wales. Perhaps it was being in the south, far from his Prestatyn birthplace, or maybe it was getting his tongue around the dragon-like phrase *Llafur newydd* — new Labour.

Perhaps he did not relish promoting a manifesto that included a version in Welsh, with even a message from Tony Blair in the language, which he could not understand. Or it could have been just an uncomfortable night in his Cardiff hotel.

Whatever the reason, the man who would be Deputy Prime Minister in a Labour government was decidedly glum as he teamed up with his old Labour chums from the Welsh party. But he surely must have been cheered by the manifesto's promise that the principality would have a minister for children, an innovation which looks

set to be denied to youngsters in the rest of the country.

Mr Prescott added another promise, that a Labour government would hold a referendum this autumn on creating a Welsh assembly. But he vigorously defended Labour's decision not to give it tax-raising powers.

Talk of devolution was tricky to deal with yesterday after Tony Blair's local difficulty in Scotland. Unsurprisingly, after less than an hour Mr Prescott bowed out. He will be back in Wales next week but for the moment he seemed pleased that his battle bus was heading for the less challenging territory of Bolton.

He left Ron Davies, Shadow Welsh Secretary, to dismiss talk of splits in the Welsh Labour Party. It is clear, however, that many Labour MPs are not keen on the idea of an assembly. But after much arm-twisting they have promised not to cause trouble. Only Llew Smith, MP for Blaenau

Gwent, remains implacably hostile and has written pamphlets opposing the move.

The other main detractor, Allan Rogers, MP for Rhondda, was convinced that an assembly would weaken local government. But he has agreed to work constructively with the party leadership and is writing a report for Mr Davies on how local authorities could benefit from the reform.

The main problem now is that three Labour MPs oppose any form of proportional representation in electing the assembly. Denzil Davies, former Treasury Minister and the MP for Llanelli, said yesterday: "I have always supported a Welsh assembly. I campaigned for it in 1978, but PR is a constitutional issue. We are entitled to express our reservations on it."

His views are shared by Ted Rowlands (Merthyr, Tŷfîl and

Rhymney) and Sir Ray Powell (Ogmore). They have privately come to a deal with the leadership that they will not vote against the second reading of a devolution Bill but they will speak against PR in Commons debates.

Ron Davies yesterday brushed aside the division. "When the legislation is put before the Commons, I expect full support from each and every Labour MP. It is a matter of constitutional propriety." He is convincing and seems determined to get his way. This was demonstrated by his grip on the Welsh manifesto, where he was allowed to include detailed policy instead of broad statements. His plan for a minister for children means that one person in the Welsh Office would take charge of all issues affecting the young, from health to education. Mr Davies also promised yesterday a rural policy for Wales.

## Labour 'chuffed' by sale of BR

Richard Branson, Britain's second-largest rail operator, claimed that Labour was secretly pleased that the Tories had sold off British Rail.

The businessman, who met Tony Blair in private only six weeks ago, said a Labour government would never have dared to sell off the network for fear of incurring the wrath of the Left. "I believe that secretly, they are quite relieved it's happened. I therefore don't think they'll do much to rock the boat." He also told *Railway magazine*: "We can work with Labour."

## Tory beaten up

Stuart Andrew, 25-year-old Conservative candidate in the safe Labour seat of Wrexham, was beaten unconscious by a gang shouting anti-Tory slogans in Beaumaris, Anglesey. His father Andrew, 52, had his skull fractured when he went to his aid.

## Monster struggle

The Official Monster Raving Loony Party is struggling to field the 50 candidates it requires to qualify for a party political broadcast on television. Party leaders, who have 40 candidates, admit that they have no idea what message they would convey.

## Sacré Blair

The flagship newspaper of the French Right, *Le Figaro*, heaped praise on Tony Blair on Friday for not promising too much in his ten-point "contract with the people", for pledging not to increase income tax and to freeze public spending for two years.

## Election turn-off

Viewers have deserted the BBC's *Nine O'Clock News* since it doubled in length to provide extra time for election coverage. According to unofficial figures, 4.3 million people watched Wednesday's news, finishing at 10pm, compared with an average of six million.

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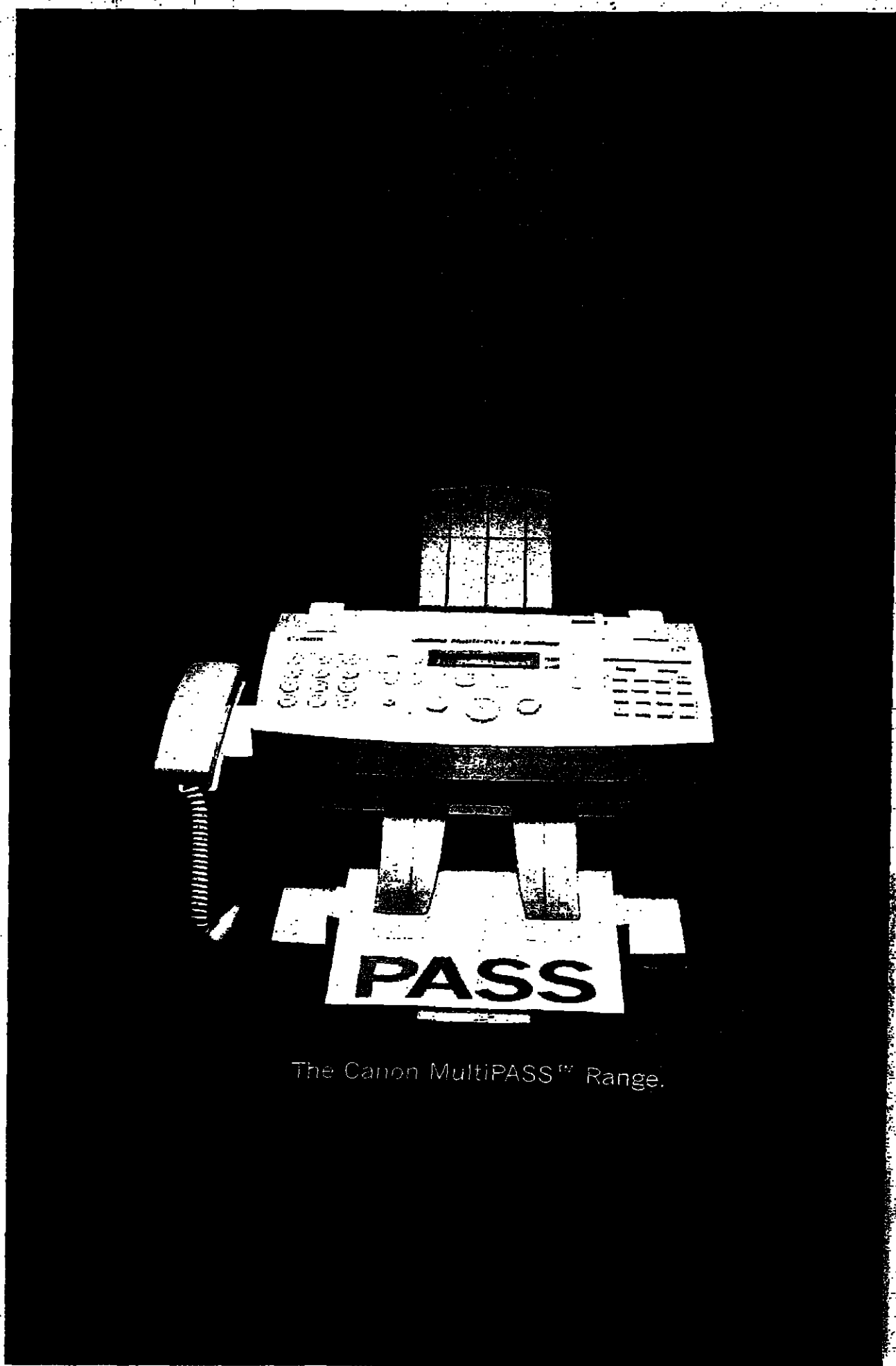
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Dominic Kennedy and Valerie Elliott describe ruses which help some candidates to steal a march

# How parties cook the books on poll expenses

THE British electoral system is the envy of the world: to stop a rich man buying his way into Parliament, the law prevents a candidate spending more than about 7p on winning each voter.

Expense returns have to be submitted after polling and are open to inspection. They must be within limits of about £3,300 for a typical seat.

In the marginal constituencies which decide each election, however, the parties bend the rules. Although the punishments are harsh, including a £5,000 fine, a ban on voting and on sitting as an MP, the chances of being caught are slim.

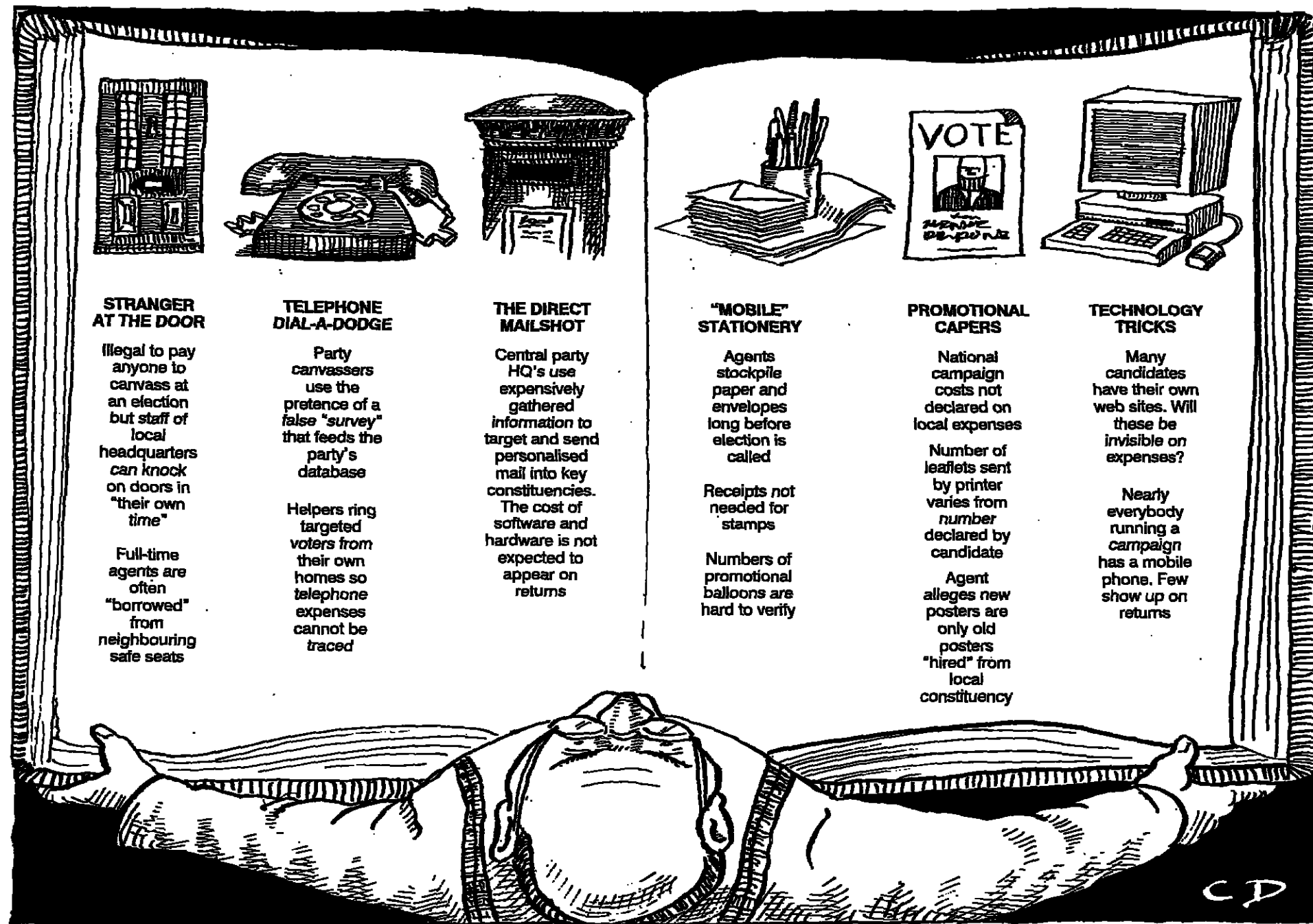
According to a Labour activist, a long-standing gentleman's agreement has been operating between his party and the Conservatives to stop them reporting each other. A Tory campaign veteran said: "You don't often get complaints because all the parties are indulging." Only twice in the past five years have people been prosecuted on charges of breaking the rules, and both were acquitted at Crown Court.

Here is *The Times's* guide to election agents' creative accounting.

**□ The stranger at the door.** The meter for each contender's election campaign starts ticking when he or she becomes the official candidate. From that moment, everything spent should be included on expenses. How do challengers make themselves known to the public before the campaign begins? A wily Tory in a no-hope seat says: "There's nothing to stop me from turning up, introducing myself to constituents and saying that I am the local party convenor, or researcher."

**□ The telephone survey.** A stranger calls. "They do not let on that they are ringing on behalf of a party," says Professor Ron Johnson, of Bristol University. "The implication is that this is just another poll." The information is sent to the party's computer database, matched with the electoral roll and stored for future use. When it comes to getting voters out on polling day, the Conservatives have recruited elderly women after learning that older voters were annoyed by being told what to do by the young. The Liberal Democrats and Tories have both given supporters the numbers of voters in key constituencies to ring from their own homes. The calls cannot be traced, so why include them in expenses?

**□ The mailshot.** The Conservatives have been assembling a secretive scheme called Programme for Identifying, and



Influencing Key Electors, developed by Keith Britto, former deputy director of special services at Central Office. This computer programme uses information such as whether people are shareholders, own cars or have bought their council houses, and it forecasts their likelihood of being Tories on a scale of one to ten. "It is remarkably accurate," says John Stanger, ex-Conservative vice-treasurer in Hazel Grove, where it was used as an experiment in 1992 and helped to secure victory for Sir Tom Arnold by 900 votes. Labour's database is so advanced that, if education becomes an issue, it can send personalised letters to parents of school-age children in key marginals within 24 hours. Only the parties know how many targeted letters have been sent from head office.

The cost of software and hardware is not expected to appear on returns.

**□ Flying agents.** Why waste a full-time agent on a safe seat when there is a key marginal next door which needs some extra help? Why tell the returning officer that the agent is being paid £30,000 a year?

**□ Stamps.** These are the one cost which can be mentioned on expenses without producing a receipt. One Conservative agent spent £7,000 on postage in his constituency at the last election; it was never declared.

**□ The Internet.** Dozens of candidates now have their own Web sites. Will these appear on expenses?

**□ Posters.** The agent buys a new set of posters for every election, costing about £2,500. He puts only about £400 on expenses, saying that the posters

have been "hired" from the local constituency association and are the same ones which were used last time.

**□ The party leader's visit.** Entertaining the leader, or a celebrity, probably costs £80 a day in travel and feeding expenses, but only £20 will be declared.

**□ Empty houses full of supporters.** In the tightest of contests, estate agents have been paid £50 to stick posters in homes which are vacant. This is illegal.

**□ Billboards.** A national advertising campaign such as "demon eyes" will not usually be declared on local expenses. If large clusters of billboards appear in the most marginal seats, so be it.

**□ A bulging stationery cupboard.** Agents stockpile paper and envelopes long before an election is called. If they

bought it during the campaign, the receipts would have to be submitted.

**□ Fuel.** Some agents succumb to temptation in rural seats where fuel is a big expense and fail to account for all the petrol used in ferrying candidates to villages and voters to polling stations.

**□ Battle buses.** The hire of a bus and driver for weeks would cripple most campaigns. Trade unions have been known to "lend" a bus to a Labour candidate.

**□ Balloons.** Buy 2,000, declare 1,000. (Try counting balloons.)

**□ The generous printer.** Supposing an agent ordered 5,000 leaflets and the printer sent 20,000 back. It is hardly the agent's fault, is it?

**□ Videos.** Campaign videos cost about £2 each. Sending one to every home in a constituency would breach expenses many times over.

**□ Mobile phones.** Nearly everybody involved in running a campaign will be carrying a

mobile phone. Few returns mention them.

**□ Photocopying.** Out of leaflets? Helpful business supporters can take one to their offices and photocopy a few hundred each. No charge.

**□ The blind eye.** An agent is legally responsible for all expenditure. In the last days of campaigning, many party workers will appear in a close-fought constituency. "You are not God," said a seasoned campaigner. "You cannot see everything."

## Labour last to submit receipts

By Russell Jenkins and Carol Midgley

THE Labour Party kept officials waiting until the eleventh hour last night to submit expense receipts for the Wirral South by-election.

Won by Ben Chapman for Labour, it was widely regarded as the most costly by-election political campaign in recent history and led to allegations that both major parties had exceeded the legal spending limit of £3,113.15 each. On the day of the poll on February 27, the UK Independence Party lodged a formal complaint with police over the amount allegedly spent by Labour and the Tories.

The deadline to hand in expense declarations expired at the end of the working day yesterday, 35 days after polling day. David Leonard, senior electoral registration officer, had been telephoned twice by a representative of the Labour Party to ask what time he left to go home.

At 4.15pm — 45 minutes before the deadline — a Labour Party worker walked into Wallasey Town Hall to hand over the expenses report in a brown envelope. It stated that Labour had spent £29,299.96 on its campaign.

The Conservative Party, which submitted its details on Thursday, also declared itself well within the limit at £27,822.59. Anthony Samuelson, of the Stop Conservatives Posing on Tobacco Companies party, who polled 124 votes, had spent £18,319.77, mostly on legal costs. Flo Lucas, for the Liberal Democrats, declared expenses of £13,790.42.

Yesterday David Lott, national organiser for the UKIP, said he would continue the complaint with police. Merseyside Police said the returning officer had to determine whether a police investigation was necessary.

## Big spenders may be holding back for a final flourish

AMID the psychological warfare between the party headquarters, secrecy and misinformation about their election budgets is rife. Talk of the imminent bankruptcy of Conservative Central Office alternates with reports of a general election kitty of no less than £40 million.

Although academic researchers should not expect accurate information until the campaign is over, one can reach reasonably reliable conclusions while it is in progress by examining the amount of advertising commissioned. In recent elections, national publicity has accounted for up to two-thirds of central Tory expenditure and up to half of Labour's campaign costs.

A survey by advertising industry sources shows that, in the 14 month run-up to the

Labour has matched Conservative spending on pre-election advertising, but there is plenty of time left for extravagance, Michael Pinto-Duschinsky writes

election (January 1, 1996, to February 28, 1997), the Referendum Party was the only really big spender. Its 128 pages of national press advertisements and its posters cost more than £5.5 million in rental charges alone. The Conservatives spent just under £3.4 million and Labour about £2.4 million. The Liberal Democrats' operations were too insignificant to appear on the advertising industry's radar. These sums exclude the Referendum Party's distributions of video

tapes, as well as direct mailshots by the main parties.

As demonstrated in 1987, when the Tories lavished £3 million on a four-day burst of advertising in the week before polling, opportunities for extravagance remain. Yet, so far, the contest between the Conservatives and Labour turns out to have been considerably less costly than expected.

In the past, when a Prime Minister has left calling the general election to the last moment, campaigns have been exceptionally expensive. That might account for the caution of the Conservatives, whose deficit in the opinion polls provides ample incentive for publicity. Maurice Saatchi has clearly imitated Beau Geste, of the French Foreign Legion, who concealed his limited firepower from the enemy.

The "Yes it Hurt. Yes it Worked" and "New Labour. New Danger" campaigns were financially modest efforts to raise controversy and, with it, free news coverage. Despite announcements by Brian Mawhinney of the improvements in Central Office finances, there was virtu-

ally no Tory poster advertising and only £700,000 of press advertisements in the first ten months of 1996.

While Central Office narrowly outspent Millbank in pre-election advertising, the cost of Opposition propaganda balances that of the Tories when account is taken of the "non-party" campaigns such as that run by the TUC.

The narrow spending gap between the two main parties contrasts with past elections. In 1987, Tory spending on its national poster and press publicity came to £6.4 million, nearly three times Labour's £2.2 million. In 1992, the Tories outspent Labour by £5.8 million to £3.3 million.

When inflation is taken into account, today a Tory campaign on the scale of 1987 would cost £10 million. Last month, for which detailed statistics are not yet available, saw a blitz of posters but almost no advertising in the national press. Talk of a £40 million campaign is way off the mark.

As to whether advertisements are effective in winning votes, there is no clear evidence. The most crucial factors appear to be coverage on television and in the news columns of the tabloids, and party election broadcasts. It is here that the Liberal Democrats have their chance.

□ Michael Pinto-Duschinsky is a senior research fellow at Brunel University.

### ELECTION SPENDING

Central Party spending on national press and poster advertising at ratecard, 1.1.1996 — 28.2.1997

	National press ads. Pages	Cost	Posters Cost	TOTAL
Referendum Party	182	£4,199,000	£1,371,000	£5,570,000
Conservative Party	29	£945,000	£2,412,000	£3,357,000
Labour Party	22	£540,000	£1,885,000	£2,405,000

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## MARATHON

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## ART

Isabel Carlisle looks at Turner's watercolour exhibition at the Tate Gallery

## FEATURE

The father, the son.  
Valerie Grove interviews novelist Martin Amis.



# Bonn and Paris break EU ranks on China rebuke

FROM PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

WESTERN policy on Beijing is in disarray as a result of Germany joining France in publicly rejecting action for the first time against China by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The issue has divided the European Union and is expected to dominate a meeting of foreign ministers beginning in The Netherlands tomorrow. The meeting has been called to discuss the future of a common foreign policy.

The annual session of the 53-nation UN rights body ends in Geneva on April 18. Although an EU resolution criticising abuses in China has failed for the past eight years at the final hurdle of a vote, rights groups view the gesture as the last chance to demonstrate international concern before Hong Kong reverts to China.

"While there may be a last-minute effort by a few individual European countries and the United States to salvage a resolution, the West's spineless deference to China out of concern for commercial contracts has all but killed the resolution before it is tabled," said Lott Leitch, a director of Human Rights Watch.

Britain will support a resolution that is likely to be introduced next week by Denmark or The Netherlands. In the wake of Chinese threats of retaliation, Britain has adopted a low profile in Geneva and is anxious not to anger Beijing

by taking a lead. Diplomats hope to extract further guarantees on Hong Kong's future before the handover on July 1.

In a letter last Monday, Hans van Mierlo, the Dutch Foreign Minister, told the other 14 members that the credibility of a common foreign policy was being undermined. He added that The Netherlands, the current EU

**Beijing has repeated promises of progress for eight years without result**

president, would no longer propose any joint initiatives on human rights. The letter also hinted at a "double standard" on the issue.

This has angered France. Then, on Thursday, Germany also announced that it rejected action against China. Both Paris and Bonn support critical dialogue and claim that previous confrontations have been unsuccessful. They have been the chief advocates of a common foreign policy and have, however, reluctantly, supported criticism of China in previous years. Paradoxically,

diplomats now accuse them of burying any remnants of European solidarity on foreign affairs.

President Chirac of France is to make a state visit to China next month in response to the visit to Paris by Li Peng, the Chinese Prime Minister, during last year's UN commissioner's meeting. This time, among other trade deals, defence equipment and a £1.2 billion Airbus order are high on the agenda.

In spite of strong public statements of concern, Bill Richardson, the American Ambassador to the UN, earlier this week also declined to lead the attempt to censure China. Like Britain, the United States will back a resolution, however, and is lobbying behind the scenes to counter Beijing's "charm offensive" among smaller nations.

American companies, including Boeing, secured several contracts in China during Vice-President Al Gore's official visit last month. Campaigners fear that the Chinese "carrot and stick" policy has been successful.

In an attempt to placate its critics, Beijing said it was "seriously examining" signing two key international covenants on human rights. But the statement, used by France as evidence of progress in China's attitude, has been repeated every year since the mid-1980s with no result.



The Hale-Bopp comet photographed over the 12,388ft Fuji, Japan's highest mountain, with an 85mm lens at f2.8 for 30 seconds on 1,600 ISO film

## Beat poet Ginsberg has cancer

New York: Doctors have given Allen Ginsberg, the American writer and beatnik, four to 12 months to live after discovering that he has inoperable liver cancer (Quentin Letts writes).

Ginsberg, 70, washed around in his youth with Jack Kerouac and is one of the last survivors of Kerouac's slimy On the Road gang of idle Fifties pioneers of permissiveness. He is "taking the news like a good Buddhist", say friends.

The unconventional and prolific poet, who has championed most things from homosexuality to hallucinogens, was in bed at home in Manhattan yesterday. Although "weezy at times", he was talking about impending death and meditating about the ultimate experience.

The best known of Ginsberg's writings is probably Howl, a 1956 poem which mourned the scrambling of a generation's minds by drugs. He was sometimes called "the most dangerous man in America".

## Russians vote to keep loot

FROM ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW

IN A rare show of defiance, Russia's lower house of parliament yesterday overturned a presidential veto on a Bill declaring all works of art seized by the Soviet Army from Nazi Germany to be Russian property.

The Bill, which had been passed by a strong majority in the Communist-dominated Duma and by the upper house, the Federation Council, was vetoed last month by President Yeltsin, who said it violated international law. It contradicts an existing agreement between Russia and Germany, calling for a negotiated settlement of the art problem.

At stake are some 200,000 works of art, including paintings by Goya, Delacroix, Van Gogh and Renoir, seized from museums and private collections in Germany by the victorious Soviet forces.

Among the most priceless artefacts are the golden treasures excavated by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy in the 19th century. Estimates vary about the overall worth of the collection, but it is generally believed to run to billions of pounds.

To overturn the presidential veto, the 450-member Duma needed a two-thirds majority vote. In the event, 308 deputies backed the motion with only 15 voting against. It will now be up to the Federation Council to confirm the decision, for which it too will require a two-thirds majority. While the

Communists hold less sway in the upper house, the growing strength of nationalists suggests that the motion will pass, unless government lobbyists succeed in convincing members of the damage such a move would cause to Russia's now excellent relations with Germany.

If both houses overturn the veto, Mr Yeltsin's only recourse is the Constitutional Court, where he can appeal within seven days. If the court rejects an appeal, he will have to sign the bill into law.

Aleksandr Kotenkov, Mr Yeltsin's personal representative to the Duma, said he was concerned that the law could jeopardise talks between Russia, The Netherlands, Poland and Germany on restitution of art works.

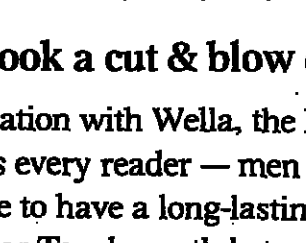
Many Russians take the view that they have a right to the art, as reparations for Soviet cultural losses suffered when Hitler's troops rampaged through the country, looting and burning churches and palaces. Tens of thousands of works of art were seized by SS battalions dedicated to taking the treasures back to Germany.

For nearly half a century after the war, the bulk of the art seized during the war remained hidden, its existence a secret. But in the early 1990s, the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg began a series of exhibitions of the booty, including several previously unknown or forgotten works by French Impressionists.

The exhibitions, which were hailed as further evidence of the new Russian authorities' openness and willingness to shed the Cold War attitudes of the past, attracted tens of thousands of visitors from all over the world.

They also reopened the sensitive issue of restitution. A commission was set up to try to resolve the problem under the Soviet-German Friendship Treaty of 1990, which declared the basic principle of mutual restitution. But virtually no headway has been made since then, with no Russian politician willing to take the political consequences of being seen to give way to German demands.

A Trojan gold cup seized in the war



A Trojan gold cup seized in the war

## Colony completes guest list

FROM CATHERINE FIELD IN HONG KONG

ARDUOUS efforts to draw up the guest list for the party to end all parties have at last borne fruit: those lucky enough to be invited to Hong Kong's handover ceremonies should be getting their invitations shortly.

Britain and China are close to finishing a 4,000-strong guest list for the event, a British official confirmed last night. The two sides have agreed to send out invitations

to 400 VIPs at foreign minister level, 1,500 invitations each to other guests, and another 600 to the media and others, the official said.

The guest list will cover countries and international organisations with which Hong Kong has close ties. Invitations will be extended to foreign ministers and heads of international organisations," said Jonathan Lange, spokesman for the handover office.

Foreign ministers rather than heads of state will make up the largest group, a sign

that Peking had succeeded in downgrading the ceremony, diplomats said. Britain will be represented by the Prince of Wales, who will deliver a speech on behalf of the Queen. Baroness Thatcher, who negotiated the agreement sealing Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty, will be among the dignitaries.

The Hong Kong Government has earmarked £18.5 million for the ceremony, £1 million of which will go on hotel rooms and transport for heads of foreign delegations.

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CHANGING TIMES

155



# Mobutu's slide from power signals end of the line for Africa's Big Men

FROM SAM KILEY  
IN JOHANNESBURG

ENVOYS from President Mobutu of Zaire are due to meet rebel leaders today for ceasefire talks which will signal the end of the 31-year rule of one of the continent's 'Big Men' and deep concern among his contemporary African potentates.

Kenya's President Moi, faced with elections later this year, banditry in the north and a crime wave in the cities, will be among the most nervous over the outcome to today's talks in Pretoria. "Moi

looks set to win the elections. But what is really bugging him is that a rebel movement dedicated to overthrowing a dictatorship has been enthusiastically backed by the outside world. He is worried that his regime could be the next one to topple," a Western ambassador in Nairobi said.

Zairean rebels this week rejected an offer of six Cabinet seats from Etienne Tshisekedi, the newly appointed Prime Minister. Having swept up a third of the country in an almost bloodless campaign, they are poised to march unopposed into the mineral rich prov-

inces of Kasai and Shaba. The rebels are likely to press their demand for Mr Mobutu to step down.

Mr Mobutu, 66, and Mr Moi, 73, are among the last members of a generation who have ruled with the absolute power of tribal chieftains, harnessing the national coffers to fund a system of corruption and patronage to ensure loyalty. When this has failed, they have resorted to violence. Mr Mobutu had hundreds of political opponents killed and tortured in the years after he came to power in 1965.

Mr Moi has been more subtle,

but Robert Ouko, his arch-rival and Foreign Minister, was murdered in mysterious circumstances in 1990. Richard Leakey, the conservationist and secretary-general of the Saffa opposition movement in Kenya, lives with the constant fear of assassination.

Having been seen by Western powers as vital defenders of capitalism during the Cold War, the continent's autocrats are now seen as men whose time is past. In place of them is a new breed, mostly men who took power in civil wars in the 1980s and 1990s, but have been carefully coached and backed by

Washington ever since. At the centre of this new breed is Uganda's President Museveni, who has weathered criticism for his refusal to allow political parties to campaign in Uganda because he has fulfilled the "good governance" requirements of donor nations — commitments to respect human rights, stamp out corruption, and clean up his administration.

So too have Eritrea's President Aferwerki and Ethiopia's President Zenawi. These three, all former guerrillas, are now among the main backers for Laurent Kabila, the Zairean rebel leader. They are

also much hated by President Moi, who has seen his regional influence wane as his friends have been pushed out of power.

Among the first to fall was the Rwandan Hutu regime of Juvenal Habyarimana whose widow now lives in Nairobi.

Mr Moi, deeply unpopular having amassed a fortune to rival the \$9 billion (£5.6 billion) held by his friend Mr Mobutu, is under no threat from armed rebellion. But recent upheavals in Kenya's universities which spread to Nairobi and Mombasa have caused many observers to wonder how tight Mr

Moi's grip still is. "People in this country will take note of what has happened in Zaire and have already started to talk of an 'uprising'," a leading opposition figure said yesterday.

□ **Lubumbashi:** Rebels entered Zaire's diamond mining capital of Mbuji-Mayi yesterday, sources in the region said. The town was "in the process of changing hands", one mining source said. Most Government troops had fled in vehicles stolen from a state-owned mining company after they looted the businesses of diamond dealers. (Reuters)

## Democrats hit by Cuba connection over cocaine cash

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE Democrats' controversial fundraising antics entered Caribbean waters yesterday with claims that a prominent Miami businessman, hoping to influence US policy towards Cuba, had solicited a \$20,000 (£12,000) party contribution from a drug smuggler while in Havana.

Congressional investigators have discovered that Vivian Mannerud, a prominent Democratic fundraiser, invited Jorge Cabrera, a cocaine trafficker later convicted on narcotics charges, to make the donation in exchange for an invitation to dine with Vice-President Al Gore.

Cabrera and the Miami underworld have already emerged in the fundraising scandal which dogs President Clinton's second term. However, the Cuba connection, in which Ms Mannerud is said to have solicited money at a meeting in Havana's Copacabana Hotel, caused a stir in Washington yesterday.

Republicans firmly opposed to any thaw in relations between America and Fidel Castro's regime have focused on the meeting and the source of the Cabrera donation as part of planned hearings into irregular Democratic fundraising practices. They are most interested in Ms Mannerud's alleged comments to Cabrera that she needed the money to elevate her status among Democrats in the hope of

improving diplomatic links between Cuba and America.

On his return to America days after the two met, Cabrera wrote a cheque for \$20,000 to the Democratic National Committee, which included the proceeds of cocaine trafficked from Colombia to south Florida. Within two weeks he had been invited to dinner with Mr Gore in an exclusive Miami suburb. Ten days later the smuggler attended a Christmas reception at the White House hosted by Hillary Clinton.

Cabrera, currently serving a 19-year sentence, had used his family fishing fleet as a front for drug peddling. Accused of serious drug offences twice in the 1980s, he was arrested three weeks after the White House party, charged with importing 6,000lb of cocaine through the Florida Keys and fined \$1.5 million.

Previously he had been photographed at both Democratic events with Mr Gore and Mrs Clinton, causing acute embarrassment to the White House when the pictures were released in October last year. The party since has swiftly returned his suspect donation. "Once we found out about Mr Cabrera's past, we immediately returned the money," said Amy Weiss, Tobin, an official for the committee. "We feel we have put this behind us."

In an interview with The

New York Times, Ms Mannerud said she could not remember soliciting the donation from Cabrera in Cuba and denied any ulterior policy motive. "People said I saw him for about five minutes," she said. "I can't imagine sitting at a table in Havana soliciting money for the Democratic Party. Who has time for that?"

However, Stephen Bronis, Cabrera's lawyer, said she had targeted his client for funds and they had discussed at least one thing in common — both had met Señor Castro. More importantly, the lawyer claimed she had indicated the need to gain credibility in the party as a means of improving stagnant relations between the Communist regime and the Clinton Administration. "She believed it was in the best interests of Cuban-Americans of her generation if the United States normalised relations with Cuba," said Mr Bronis.

America first imposed a trade ban on Cuba in 1963 and the embargo was strengthened five years ago to prohibit subsidiaries of American companies from doing business with the Communist island.

Last year, under the terms of the Helms-Burton Act signed by Mr Clinton, sanctions were tightened further, punishing foreign companies which did business in Cuba and provoking a trade war with the European Union.

## Renault workers protest at lost jobs

FROM REUTERS  
IN BRUSSELS

BELGIAN riot police clashed yesterday with Renault workers who marched through Brussels in an attempt to save their jobs and force European governments to increase employment protection.

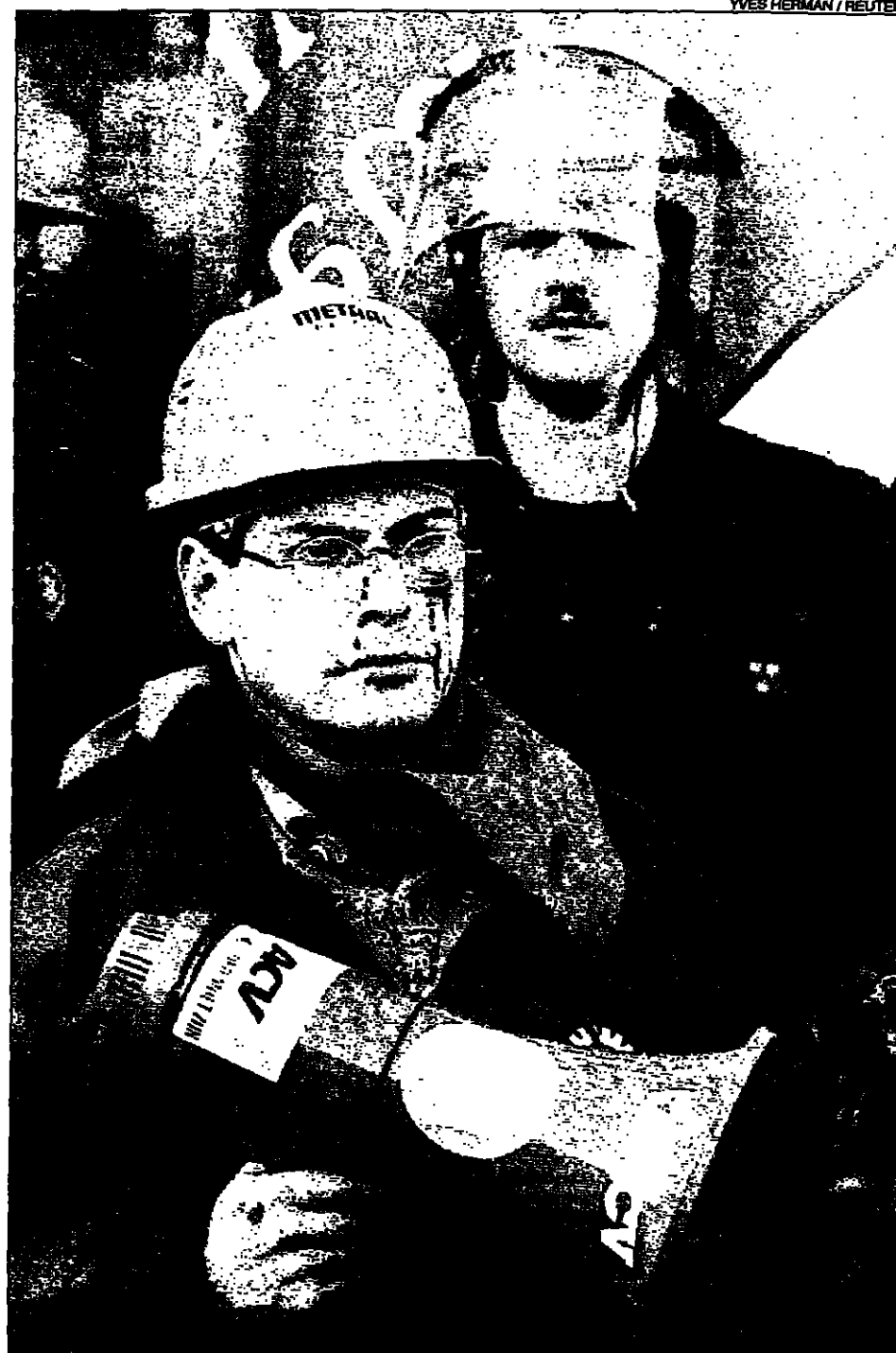
The police turned water cannon on the demonstrators, who hurled stones, eggs and fireworks, brandished wooden and steel staves and tried to tear down barbed wire barricades.

The Renault workers were joined by delegations from France and Spain and the bankrupt Belgian steel firm Forges de Clabecq. Police estimated the numbers at 1,000.

They moved from the Flemish regional government buildings to the Belgian parliament and then on to the headquarters of the European Commission. There were no reports of serious injuries or arrests.

There has been a rash of protests in Belgium and France since the French car-maker announced in February that it would close its profitable plant at Vilvoorde, near Brussels, in July, with the loss of 3,100 jobs.

The workers who have occupied the plant and held cars worth billions of francs for ransom, received a boost on Thursday when a Brussels court ruled that Renault had broken the law by failing to consult its employees. The company says that the closure will go ahead.



An injured demonstrator in front of an egg-spattered Belgian policeman yesterday

## Netanyahu weighs up airborne onslaught

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER  
IN JERUSALEM

THE need for an urgent US initiative to save the Middle East peace process grew yesterday as Israeli-Arab violence erupted for the sixteenth day and Israel said military action was being considered for the first time against Islamic cells in areas of Palestinian control.

The Tel Aviv daily Yediot Aharonot disclosed that undercover Israeli troops had arrested a nine-strong Hamas squad planning attacks.

In the West Bank city of Hebron, Jewish settlers fought back with stones against a crowd of 400 Palestinians who attacked their homes with petrol bombs. Israeli troops used teargas and rubber-coated bullets, leaving 16 Arabs and three Israelis wounded.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, is coming under growing pressure from rightwingers to take tougher action. Yesterday it was disclosed that at a private meeting of his Likud party the Prime Minister said he was considering all options, interpreted as a warning that action will be taken if more suicide attacks are launched by Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

Israeli sources said measures under review included helicopter commando raids on suspected militants, killing of Islamic leaders and deportation of suspected bombers.

Mr Netanyahu also threatened military action against the Palestinian Authority unless it implemented a crackdown on Islamic guerrillas.

### WORLD IN BRIEF

## South Africa 'has 1.3m rapes a year'

Johannesburg: A United Nations report claims as many as one in ten of South Africa's female population — 1.3 million women — are raped each year (Inigo Gilmore writes). The UN human rights report, published this week, claims that this number is 36 times higher than the official figure because victims fail to report the crimes, police believe. The apartheid legacy of mistrust of the police, the report says, is largely to blame. Mark Shaw, of the Institute of Security Studies, while acknowledging that rape is on the rise, sounded a note of caution on the figure. "The point seems to be that rape is an extension of violence in a violent society."

## Orphan demands revenge

New York: Lukas Dainys, eight, whose parents were shot dead on Easter Sunday, said he wanted revenge on their killer (Quentin Letts writes). The son of Lithuanian immigrants was orphaned when his parents were shot in the head while relaxing in their home. A colleague of Mrs Dainys has been charged with the shooting. Lukas, who was sleeping when the killings occurred, told the New York Post: "When he gets the electric chair, I want to press the button to kill him." The Dainys arrived in America only eight months ago.

## Albanian deployment set

Rome: An Italian-led multinational security force is expected to begin deploying in Albania from April 14, the Foreign Ministry said here after a first meeting in the city of senior diplomats from the eight countries that have either pledged troops to the operation or have said they are considering taking part in some other way. The statement confirmed that General Luciano Forlani of the Italian Army has been appointed to command the force. (Reuters) Letts, page 21

## Father yields on \$17m estate

New York: The father of Hollywood child actor Macaulay Culkin yielded control of the 16-year-old's \$17 million (£10 million) estate. Kit Culkin, 51, and Patricia Brentrup, 41, the mother of his five children, managed the acting careers of Macaulay and his siblings before they split. Mr Culkin said he did not wish to contest custody. Miss Brentrup will have control of her children and their money until they are older.

## Rehearsal for peace force

Nyanga, Zimbabwe: About 1,500 soldiers from nine southern African armies — some of them longtime foes — began 14 days of joint military manoeuvres in mountainous eastern Zimbabwe that could lead to the formation of a joint peacekeeping force for African trouble spots. Civil war in Zaire is just one example of threats to the region. (AP)



Alan Greenspan with his partner, Andrea Mitchell

## Greenspan invests in long-term bond

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

WITH the markets safely closed, the chairman of America's Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, will tomorrow marry his long-term investment partner, Andrea Mitchell.

Mr Greenspan, 71, will wed Miss Mitchell, 50, in a quiet ceremony in Virginia. The groom is expected to allow himself a brief burst of "irrational exuberance" (his recent description of the Dow Jones index) before he returns to his desk on Monday morning.

He and his fiancée, a journalist he has courted for 12 years, are "too busy" to trifle with a honeymoon. She must attend to the demands of a career in television. He has the global economy to run.

Up and down the East Coast of America, the power set are watching Mr Greenspan's merger with something he understands all too well: interest. Henry Kis-

singer, the former Secretary of State, this week threw a party for the couple at Mortimer's, a handsome Manhattan restaurant where the assembled crowd was probably worth more than the combined wealth of several African countries.

For the wedding, about 75 guests will observe the clinching of the most important deal in the life of the veteran banker. They will include Barbara Walters, the perennial media queen and a previous Greenspan step-out who, with everyone else, will be shuttled to the wedding by humble bus (note the curb on spending) from Washington DC's Jockey Club.

The Federal Reserve chairman proposed to Miss Mitchell on Christmas Day — a quiet day on the markets.

Leading article, page 21

## Insurers sue ailing Julie Andrews

New York: Julie Andrews, 61, is being taken to court by the insurance companies that issued cover for her current Broadway show. American Insurance Group and associated companies claim the actress was less than honest about her health record when insurance was taken out for the hit musical *Victor/Victoria*, in which she stars.

Taking insurance proved a wise precaution, since Ms Andrews has had a bad

time with her health and voice. She has missed performances, having contracted sore throats, coughs, gall-bladder difficulties (which required surgery), laryngitis and exhaustion. Such is her drawing power that when she is absent from a show Broadway fans demand refunds, presenting the insurers with bills that they are reluctant to pay.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the insurers have faced payments total-

ling £1.6 million (£1 million), with possibly more to come.

Ms Andrews has received high praise for the way she has performed in the musical, but the former young star of *The Sound of Music* and *Mary Poppins* is only human, and her ageing bones have creaked under the weight of her demanding role. She is currently confined to near silence during off-stage daylight hours to rest her voice.

If your bed is ten years old or more, the strain will start to tell.

You can't defy the ageing process... and there is no point taking it out on the ones you love. Why should they put up with you being irritable, restless and snappy when you are literally lying on the problem. A bed that is ten years old or more may not be giving you the comfort and support you need for a good, healthy night's sleep. Lack of quality sleep will hurt your appetite and enthusiasm for everyday living. The answer could be a new bed. As the Sleep Council says: "Sleep good, feel good". So if your bed is feeling the strain as much as you are, get along to your local Sleep Council stockist now. The rest will take care of itself.



For your free copy of the BED BUYERS GUIDE tel: 01756 792327

Buy your new bed from an authorized Sleep Council stockist where you see the blue 'SLEEP GOOD - FEEL GOOD' sign.



# Great Mothers' boys

## Winters of deadly discontent

## Cantona heads a winner

THERE are 23,000 official Manchester United supporters in Norway. You are as likely to find a child wearing an Eric Cantona cap in Oxford as in Old Trafford. As well as about £350,000 of Manchester United-related kit each year in Norway," says Ole Pederson, who runs United's Scandinavian supporters' club. "We have 4,000 more members than the Liverpool fan club, and we have thousands more unofficial supporters."

Every Saturday since 1969, an English game has been broadcast on Norwegian television. Ole Gunnar Solksjaer, the Norwegian striker who plays for United, is part of the reason for the club's current popularity, though he is eclipsed by Cantona. "We had a Treasurer in the Government once who was a Tottenham Hotspur fan," says Mr Pederson. "He didn't last long."

## Call to push for return of Gibraltar

**RESEARCHERS** at a Spanish think-tank that was headed by Eduardo Serra from June 1993 until he was appointed Defence Minister last May have called on José María Aznar, the Prime Minister, to establish a special unit in his office to "recover the sovereignty of Gibraltar" (Giles Tremlett writes).

A report commissioned by the Madrid-based Institute for International Questions and Foreign Policy says: "The existence of a British colony on Spanish territory is like a cancer."

The report calls on Señor Aznar to set up a special unit to renegotiate the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht by which Britain gained sovereignty over Gibraltar. It says Spain should aim for a negotiated settlement that will take into account the interests of the citizens of the Rock. But it adds that this is secondary to the main objective, which must be to recover Spanish sovereignty over Gibraltar.

# European nations sign ban on human cloning

FROM GILES TREMLETT IN OVIEDO, SPAIN

**TWENTY** European countries yesterday signed what was hailed as the first international convention to control research into human genetic engineering and cloning.

The Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, signed in Oviedo, Spain, forbids the use of genetic engineering techniques for anything other than medical purposes and effectively bans human cloning.

"It stops people toying with the human genome to make sure, for example, that their descendants all have blonde hair and blue eyes," said an official from the Council of Europe, which has master-minded the convention.

The accord also specifically bans the production of human embryos exclusively for research purposes and prevents parents using in vitro fertilisation techniques to choose the sex of their children. It further bans the commercial trade in

human organs. Western and Central European countries signed, including France, Italy and Spain. But Germany refused to, declaring that the convention is not strict enough. "They have not forgotten the traumas of the eugenics research of the Third Reich," the official said.

The election campaign prevented Britain from signing. John Major's Government had been expected to sign, but the next Health Secretary is expected to turn his attention

The convention includes a strict declaration on a patient's right to be fully informed on the consequences of any medical intervention and to refuse

that treatment. It also protects individuals from being discriminated against on the basis of their genetic make-up. Daniel Tarschys, the council's Swedish Secretary-General, said the convention established the principle that the

interests and welfare of human being should prevail over those of society or science.

Mr Tarschys gave a warning, however, that European biomedical companies could easily get around the convention's restrictions by carrying out experiments in Third World countries without legislation to control research.

"It is not enough just to promote new laws in developed countries," he said. "The widest possible international accord is needed."

The convention creates basic agreement on the limits of biomedical research across Europe but does not prevent individual countries passing stricter domestic legislation.


Mr Tarschys said he hoped the council's 20 remaining members would sign the convention over the coming months. America, Japan, Canada and the Holy See have also reserved the right to become signatories.



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## OPINION

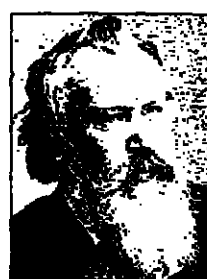
**House of disarray: why Covent Garden took so long to sort out its season**



## THEATRE

**Child's play: demands grow for a National Children's Theatre to be established**

## THE TIMES ARTS



## MUSIC

**The centenary of Brahms's death is marked, in subdued style, at the Wigmore Hall**



## ON MONDAY

**Reviews of Eternal at Wembley, and a rare show of Turner watercolours**

Who said that great fiction was dead? Back on January 31, speaking at the South Bank Show Awards, Tony Blair declared that the arts are "not an add-on, or something we just talk about on page 24 of the manifesto: they are central to our vision of a decent and good society". Gosh, how the assembled juries cheered those heartwarming sentiments! I even jotted them down on a menu, so that I could contemplate them in moments of spiritual crisis.

So has Tony been as good as his word? Well, this week Labour published its manifesto. The good news is, its arts policy is not buried on page 24. The bad news is, it's buried on page 30, just behind details of Labour's "longstanding commitment to angling".

In a 13,000-word manifesto, the arts bit runs to 174 words, and this includes a bizarre sentence about "new quality assurance in hotel accommodation". New Labour, same old philistines? So it seems.

Still, if you list those 20th-century politicians who took a keen interest in culture (Stalin,

Hitler, Ceausescu...) you have to conclude that the traditional approach of the British ruling classes — total artistic apathy — is probably safer.

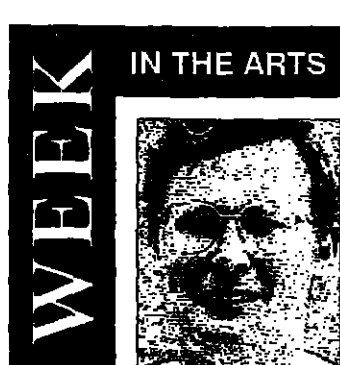
Now, what's going on at the Royal Opera House? The footlights are on, but is anybody home? Has that Titanic among theatres clamped down, Albanian-style, on all contact with the outside world?

You may well ask, Covent Garden closes for its famous redevelopment in three months. For a decade its bosses have been dimly aware (and dim is the word) that the Royal Opera and Ballet would need other venues for two years. They considered Drury Lane, the Lyceum, even a temporary theatre by Tower Bridge. They thought they had a gentleman's agreement with the Albert Hall. But nobody actually did the deals. The years flew by. And the

fury of Covent Garden's patrons grew. After all, if you are regularly spending hundreds of quid on tickets, you expect to be kept informed. Strange quirk of human nature, that. The disarray culminated this week when a press briefing was suddenly postponed.

Well, yesterday Covent Garden confirmed at least some rumours. The Royal Opera will indeed spread its wings to the Barbican, Albert Hall and Shaftesbury Theatre. The Royal Ballet will tread the exotic boards of the Labatt's Apollo. And the melancholy but brilliant Bernard Haitink will stay on as music director until 2002, to general relief.

So why all the delay? First, it seems, the opera house's technicians — never Britain's jolliest workforce — threatened to strike. Their union, Bectu, claimed that performances in Hammersmith constituted a "tour". Tours, as you may have guessed, trigger a whole



RICHARD MORRISON

new astronomy of extra payments. The management's response — that a trip of ten stops down the Piccadilly Line hardly qualifies as one of the world's epic journeys — cut little ice.

Secondly, Covent Garden was still arguing this week with the

other venues about whose box office sells the tickets. The point is less academic than you might think. If other venues sell tickets, they will gain access to Covent Garden punters: the country's most affluent theatregoers.

Thirdly, some of Covent Garden's biggest patrons are getting twitchy about whether they will receive the same tender loving care in alternative venues as they do in the Crush Bar. The answer is that they won't. This has caused tears in some quarters. More delay.

And lastly? Well, no Covent Garden saga would be complete without "star turns". Just as Covent Garden thought it could announce Albert Hall performances of Gounod's *Faust* with Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu, opera's "golden duo" pulled out. "We are well used to Mr Alagna and Miss Gheorghiu changing their minds," an opera house spokesman says wearily.

"We have contingency plans." But more time has been lost.

The trouble is, every hitch generates more contempt for Covent Garden, particularly overseas. It's good that the opera house has finally gone public on at least some plans. Nevertheless, the whole closure business has been grotesquely bungled. Let's hope that the redevelopment itself is better managed. With £78 million of lottery money invested, the public expects competence.

Finally, do you know what time it is? It's exactly 1,000 days before the millennium, that's what it is — and in Greenwich last night they unveiled a giant clock to tick off every blinking milli-second to Mill-Day. And if you think that's a pathetic waste of money, then I don't think you have quite grasped the patriotic aspects of the exercise. The fact is, the Greenwich

authorities are paranoid about being left behind on December 31, 1999. How else can you explain the desperate historical note they have issued? "According to the Resolution of the 1884 International Meridian Conference, Washington DC," it drones, "it was agreed that the universal day would begin at midnight on the Greenwich Meridian. Therefore, by international decree, the Prime Meridian at Greenwich is the point from which the millennium will begin." Nice try, chaps, but hopeless. What are they going to say in Australia on December 31, 1999? "Hey, put the bubbly on hold! It may be midnight here, but according to the 1884 Meridian Conference we cannot celebrate for another ten hours." I think not.

What's more, Paris also switches on its Countdown Clock this weekend. And since Paris keeps European time, it will presumably reach the millennium precisely one hour ahead of Greenwich. Will our Gallic friends wait courteously before starting the party? Well, what do you think? Not in a thousand years.

## Bottom place in the Tony awards



In the dark: a schoolboy takes part in an English Shakespeare Company workshop

They are the forgotten audience — the ten million or so schoolchildren between eight and 15 who, directors and playwrights believe, have been disenfranchised as theatregoers.

For them, theatre is either pantomime, dramatised national curriculum texts, or what both funding authorities and venues dismiss as "youth theatre", an unpredictable box-office test even when professionally performed, but which is more often than not done by amateurs.

But now the call is out to address what Michael Bogdanov calls "this national scandal" with a full-blooded National Children's Theatre, a permanent centre for not only the receiving of tour groups but also the nurturing of writers and designers, and the training of directors of children's plays.

Nicolas Kent, artistic director of the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn which has just got £2 million from the lottery to develop itself for new audiences, says the Tricycle has always had children's theatre as one of its mainstays, and audience enthusiasm has gradually built over the past four years.

"We're doing workshops for children as young as 18 months, which is pretty rare here, but in Europe — Italy, Germany, Scandinavia particularly — the provision of theatre for children, rather than theatre that adults feel they should have, is a national duty."

Jude Kelly of the West Yorkshire Playhouse has long been an advocate of children's and young people's professional theatre, but has never had the funding to pursue it.

"Adults must be educated to the fact that almost any good theatre is enjoyed by children from the age of nine," she says. "Young people are very dis-

**THEATRE: Plans are afoot to lure children out of the house and into the theatre. Simon Tait reports**

cerning with their own tastes in music, TV, fashion — and theatre, if they get the chance."

In June there is to be a come-all-ye forum to thrash out the whole question, out of which is likely to come a National Lottery proposal.

Among the most vociferous at the get-together will be Bogdanov, who has resurrected the English Shakespeare Company for the current tour of his children's production of *Beowulf*, in tandem with a darkly fascinating new *Midsummer Night's Dream*, now halfway through its nationwide itinerary.

"Children have consistently been unrepresented in touring," he says. "They are not part of theatre priorities, and they have not been treated as part of the community or of

society. I think it's appalling that they're still being offered *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Snow Queen*, *Sleeping Beauty* and so on, because that's what theatres can get funding for."

There are, of course, theatres specialising in children's work, such as the Unicorn and the Polka, but their productions rarely tour and their shows tend to be aimed at the more captive under-eights.

The problem with older children, Kent says, is prising them away from computer games and Saturday morning television, a difficulty shared by the ESC: while box offices have been satisfactorily high for weekday performances during the tour, there has been a palpable drop on Saturdays.

Tony Fagan of the London International Festival of The-

atre (Lift) says it is a matter of perception. Last year Lift staged a highly successful education festival and found a sophisticated audience not only ready to see theatre aimed at them, but to participate. "A permanent centre properly resourced and with a high profile could make the most fundamental difference," he says.

The Royal National Theatre has gone some way towards taking the lead. This summer sees the second BT National Connections festival of new plays for young people which will feature work by the likes of Wole Soyinka, Bryony Lavery, Naomi Wallace, Simon Bent and Liz Lochhead. But these are one-acters specifically for young amateurs to produce and perform and, at

an hour's length, will almost certainly never see professional treatment.

"I would love to have a parallel festival of professional theatre for young people, but the financial implications are impossible to take on with existing funding," says Susie Graham-Adrian, head of the NT's education department.

There is undoubtedly an audience, she says, and the professional expertise to satisfy it, but the writers, directors and actors have never had the resources to create the work.

"There has been a phenomenal output of children's literature in the past ten years which shows a degree of sophistication in the market, but somehow this has not happened for plays," Jude Kelly says. "Children are now part of the leisure scene — even pubs have to cater for them now — and it's high time this was stretched to theatre. It doesn't have to be stretched far."

## In tune with the old curmudgeon

## CONCERT

**Brahms Centenary Wigmore Hall**

THE difference between the Wigmore Hall's light-filled anniversary celebration of Schubert and this sombre Brahms evening was palpable. Brahms was, after all, no Son of the Muses, rather a growly old German bear who died convinced his place in musical history would be comparable to that of Cherubini.

We love to hate him: Nietzsche, revealingly, wrote of his "melancholy of impotence". Or perhaps we hate to love him, still embarrassed by integrity of the man, revealed in complex and contradictory integrity of the man, revealed in Graham Johnson's *Viennese Requiem* with the International Songmakers on Thursday.

The evening began somewhat diffidently, with a sequence of songs that, to paraphrase the criticism of one of them by a close friend of Brahms, seemed composed more out of skill than out of the heart's blood. But it rose to a fluent re-creation of the composer's last years, months, days.

This compassionate re-creation was done in vintage Songmakers style. Soprano Geraldine McGreevy and contralto Ingeborg Danz incarnated in song Brahms's relationship with his two "angels of judgment", Elisabeth

von Herzogenberg and Clara Schumann, whose criticism, approval and love were so vital to his writing.

The young contralto Ingeborg Danz's *Wie Melodien zieht es mir* and *Morgens Fahrt* were high points of the evening. So was Johnson's accompanying: aptly barking and tetchy in *Kein Haus, keine Heimat*, and then thrilling to the fresher air of a *handful of songs he sneaked* in by Schumann and Wolf.

Johnson made a persuasive case for Wolf's little satire on music critics — the *Abtschied* ("Farewell") in which the fateful hack is kicked downstairs — being pointed directly at Eduard Hanslick (Wagner's Beckmesser) and, indirectly, through their friendship and through a specific musical reference to a canon in the First Piano Quartet, to Brahms himself. Baritone Stephen Varcoe relished the notion in performance.

HILARY FINCH

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# The power and the glory of conjunctions

No words are more emotive than 'but' or 'and', says Derwent May

What is the most sentimental word in the English language? The answer is the word "but". I realised that when I started writing the Nature Notes for *The Times* some years ago. If I wrote "Violets are coming out. Few trees are in leaf yet." I was merely giving the reader information. However, if I wrote "Violets are coming out but few trees are in leaf yet." I was charging the whole scene with emotion, manipulating the reader into a melancholy feeling of winter being slow to go.

Furthermore, if I wrote "Few trees are in leaf yet but violets are coming out." I was doing the opposite: cheering the reader with the feeling that spring was already on its way.

As the Nature Notes were meant to be a bulletin rather than a burst of lyricism, I have been sparing of the "buts" ever since, or sometimes, perhaps, have cheated slightly by juxtaposing observations to give a mild "but" effect.

Shakespeare knew the power of "but". Of his 154 sonnets, 18 have a closing couplet that begins with a "But" (as well as quite a number of "Yets").

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

However, these are far more than sentimental "buts". They set a whole swirl of passionate emotion into movement, reinforced by the rhythmic pause before them and the clinking rhymes that follow. They are among the most glorious "buts" in the language.

Shakespeare also explicitly remarks on the power of "buts" and "yets" in *Antony and Cleopatra*. When the messenger brings Cleopatra the news that Antony has married Octavia, but is too frightened to tell her, and stammers out: "But yet, madam —", Cleopatra takes the full measure of those monosyllables.

"I do not like 'but yet', it does annoy.  
The good precedence: lie upon 'but yet'!  
'But yet' is as a gaoler to bring forth  
Some monstrous malefactor.  
Priests, friends,  
Pour out the pack of matter to my ear."

"And" is a quite different story, and this, too, struck me when I was writing for *The Times* recently — a review of a book by the great champion of the Surrealists, André Breton.

About one of the essays in the book, I first wrote: "This is one of the liveliest accounts of boyish rebellion and nihilism I have ever read." But that, I knew, was weak — and it was the fault of the "and". To link "rebellion" and "nihilism" in that way was slack and inexpressive. I changed it to "... one of the liveliest accounts of rebellious, boyish nihilism I have ever read."

With that, I hoped, I had achieved a quite different effect. Two abstract nouns slopping about in no sort of relation to each other had given way to a tiny, evolving picture.

So "and" is a dangerous word, and can be a killer. Yet it has other powers. Even as a bare, bald linking word it can make an effect — what the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* calls "connecting occurrences of the same member to express continuous repetition".

The Bible gives the best instances of that. "And Hebron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salomon" is pretty boring, it has to be admitted. But imagine it without the "ands". They are what give a great deal of the

King James Old Testament its rolling grandeur.

"And" can be more subtle, though. If used in the right way, it can create anticipation and sweep the end of a sentence up into an awesome climax, as in A. E. Housman's poem in praise of a mercenary army:

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;  
They stood, and earth's foundations stay;  
Imagine that second line without the "and". That simple little word is what gives their meaning and force to the great words that follow it.

Another example, since we have been talking of early spring, is in Wordsworth's lines on that subject. The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
To catch the breezy air,  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there.

Again the "and" in that third line is where the emotion floods in and turns what follows from a statement of belief into an impassioned assertion that nature is sentient.

To shift the focus somewhat, I have been looking at the three main party manifestos in the light of these thoughts. Manifestos do not like the word "but". The words that follow a "but" may make some bold claim about what the party will do, but the emotional charge of "but" works in both directions. So the words that come before the "but" — which are probably an admission of some merit on the part of the other side — get a boost too.

There is an apt German saying, here: "Die Sache hat ein Aber" — "The case has a but in it".

One can hear John Major and Tony Blair both saying in their manifesto writers: "But me no writers." In fact, the Conservative manifesto is fairly discreet with them. In Mr Major's foreword there are two sentences beginning with "But". Both follow a statement of good things that the Government has done, such as increasing the role of the State and decreasing the role of the State, and both promise more of such good things: "But now we have the chance..." "But now we must build on..." In both cases the "But" is slightly dangerous because it throws emphasis back on the fact that not enough of these good things have been done.

The Labour manifesto is more risky. There is a dramatic "But" in Mr Blair's first paragraph — "But I believe Britain can and must be better" — which gives a good deal of retrospective emphasis to the suggestion that Britain is pretty good already.

Even more dangerously, a whole paragraph soon afterwards begins with "But": "But we have liberated these values from outdated dogma." That "but" certainly reminds the reader both that there are Labour values that are not exclusive to them, and that they have not themselves done too well by those values so far.

There are few "ands" in either of those manifestos. Manifesto writers understand that little word's killer effect. Bold assertions and promises have to stand on their own. They can go weak at the knees when yoked together.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats, as far as I can see, do the best job of keeping both these unreliable little landmines out of their text. At the beginning of their sentences they stick to a dull but steady repetition of "We will..."

In fact, three-letter words work far harder than four-letter words — and sometimes as much by their absence as their presence.

By their "ands" and their "buts" shall ye know them.

Three-letter words work far harder than four-letter words

For many politicians, there is only one race that matters today, says Geoffrey Wheatcroft

## Statesmen of our national turf

A hundred years ago, the Grand National was won by a horse with a political ring to its name. Manifesto ran in eight Nationals in all, was third three times and won twice, with a mere 11st 3lb in 1897, and 12st 7lb two years later. And, four days before the last general election, Grand National was won by Party Politics.

Politics and racing have, after all, been connected on and off almost since Charles II. The two share a nervous atmosphere. Each is a contest in which the hot favourite sometimes wins — but sometimes falls at the last fence — and both are tinged with skulduggery. Part of the very vocabulary of politics is sporting. Steeplechasing is a direct descendant of fox-hunting, whose whippers-in give their name to government or opposition whips, however much that thought might distress "antis" in the Labour Whips' Office.

The *Times* has just reported that a Blair government may not after all make parliamentary time for a Bill to ban hunting. No doubt unconnected with that — although the phrase was unconsciously fascinating — Tony Blair said yesterday that "we have shot the Tories" for over devolution. I doubt whether he has ever shot or hunted a fox.

The House of Commons is a less

sporting place and duller than in the days when the Grand National was as keenly awaited at Westminster as the Budget. In a happier age, Parliament adjourned on Derby Day (when, according to that cynical Liberal, Sir William Harcourt, an Irish MP's vote cost "a fiver, and £10 in Derby week").

No prime minister has ever owned a winner of the Grand National. But, just over a century ago, Lord Rosebery achieved a feat unique in several respects. He won the Derby not once but twice, in successive years, with Ladas in 1894 and Sir Visto in 1895. The odds against any man owning back-to-back Derby winners are long enough; to win the race twice within what was no more than 15 months' premiership was fantastically improbable. To many Liberal Nonconformists, a leader who owned racehorses was little better

than a voluptuary. Lord Rosebery could have made matters better or worse with the horse of that name: if he never owned a Grand National winner, it was bad judgment rather than luck. He owned the well-bred colt, Voluptuary, who won several good races on the flat as a three-year-old. Carelessly sold by Lord Rosebery, Voluptuary was trained as a steeplechaser, and won the 1894 Grand National as a six-year-old before going quietly on to another career: the stage. The actor Leonard Boyle bought him and rode him night after night in the Grand National scene of *Prodigal Daughter* at Drury Lane.

No British prime minister since has approached Lord Rosebery's eminence on the turf, though the former Irish Taoiseach Charles Haughey has owned some good chasers. Few have even shared his

passion for racing. The nearest was Sir Winston Churchill, for whom it was a consolation of old age.

His father Lord Randolph had won the Oaks with L'Abbesse de Jouarre in 1889, when Winston was a schoolboy. That schoolboy didn't register his colours until he was in his seventies. But he then proved a lucky owner, notably with Colonel II, who won 13 races, and bred the splendid Vienna, who was third in the St Leger and, more importantly, sired Vaguely Noble, one of the great horses of his time.

Although the Tories were once the party of the "Gentlemen of England", and Labour inherited something of the Liberals' chapel-going distaste for racing and betting, there have been exceptions on both sides. Harold Macmillan married into the racing-mad Cavendish family, but never acquired their addiction. Sir Alec Douglas-

Home's sport was cricket (as is John Major's), and Sir Edward Heath's was sailing.

On the other side, the Labour MP Reginald Paget was a keen hunting man. And that shadowy personage, Colonel George Wigg, was shifted by Harold Wilson from Paymaster General to chairman of the Horserace Betting Levy Board, where he made a different kind of nuisance of himself, as well as doing considerable good for racing, his great passion.

More recently, Lord Wyatt of Weeford, the former left-wing Labour MP — hard as that must sometimes be for him as well as others to believe — has been chairman of the Tote. And that ardent racing man Robin Cook, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, will doubtless be taking time off today from the election.

And this year's Party Politics for party politicians? Mr Cook says he is backing Avro Anson, who may start favourite. Straight Talk sounds like Paddy Ashdown's horse, while Mr Blair might like to back Smith's Band, in honour of his admirable predecessor. For the Prime Minister, I suggest Turning Trix. That is what he has to do in the next three weeks to survive at No 10. If that horse wins this afternoon, it could be a portent.

## Do they think we are stupid?

The 'dumbing down' of the election is an insult to us, the voters

Vote, vote, vote for Tony Blair —  
Chuck old Major out the door —  
If it wasn't for the law,  
I would punch him on the jaw,  
And we don't want Major any more.

Elections are dangerous moments for a politician. They turn the gold of high office into the base metal of the hustings. They are the extension of civil war by other means, yet they retain the character of a civil war. The public expects a fight, even if nothing is at stake.

The general view of the present election is that nothing is at stake beyond the tenancy of Downing Street. The Thatcherite revolution has triumphed. It conquered the Tory party and has now conquered Labour. As Chesterton said on being shown the Café Royal menu, there is little in the Labour manifesto to which Lady Thatcher could take strong exception. John Major was her heir but Mr Blair has become her done. The two men must fight over a straw.

Yet must the election be so dumb? I returned from holiday this week, picked up the two party manifestos and groaned. Labour features a ridiculous Mr Blair looking hostile, unsmiling and exhausted, as if fleeing a Benetton commercial for a role in *Trainspotting*. What mighty conclave of spin gurus agreed this image? The Tory manifesto, so free in attacking British education, braves a schoolboy howler in its title, misplacing the "only" in "You can only be sure with the Conservatives". It reads like a condom advertisement. I prefer to be sure "only with the Conservatives".

When I mentioned this to a party worker, she said: "Oh come on, the manifesto is not meant for you." In other words, who cares about grammar? Manifestos are for plebs, for the Great Unlearned. And they will not read them. They are show, marketing, mood music, political wallpaper. Elections are a passing masquerade, while Ye Old England quietly shuffles the Westminster pack. They are a necessary ritual of power.

I can see her point. Reading this week's manifestos was like watching saliva dribble. Boast follows whinge follows boast follows whinge. They are written to be identical, as Tony Benn once protested, "by Dr Mori and Dr Gallup." We will switch spending from economic failure to invest-

ment," says one. "We favour new combinations of available benefits to suit individual circumstances." "A good education is the birthright of every child." "We have zero tolerance of underperformance." A plodding political platitudes can be propped up by inspired oratory. Churchill knew the trick. On paper, it merely plinks.

Most of this week's phraseology dies on the brain. "Conservatives embrace evolutionary change." (I should hope so.) "We have turned around our economic fortunes." British English teaching may be bad, but not this bad. This is simple waffle. Labour has not stolen the Tories' clothes. Both parties have stolen Paddy Ashdown's, through whose gossamer garments every political breeze passes unnoticed.

Manifestos are games with mirrors, played contemptuously of voters. Their writers and readers — mostly politicians and journalists — claim that they are not for them. Manifestos are to reach out to simpletons in the sticks — people who cannot do joined-up writing, yet supposedly thirst for statistics on comparative GDPs. Elections have joined books, newspapers and broadcasters in the great drift downmarket, in the "dumbing down" of Britain. This week's manifestos are on a par with sleaze stories and headless chickens. They are to furnish a day's media distraction — until the awful business is over on May 1.

I go so far with the Central Office cynic, but no further. First, there must be protein even in the most vegetarian manifesto. Heaven knows, enough blood is spilt in the writing. Those gripped by the hand of power find it hard to compose 20,000 words and say nothing. Adverbs and adjectives may be subservient but, as Humpty Dumpty said, verbs and nouns have a way of their own. The Tory plans for privatised pensions, tax relief for spouses and the sale of London Underground are innovations forged in the heat of manifesto compromise. They are real changes.

By comparison, there is little in Labour's manifesto but raw ambition. Yet even its emptiness was the outcome of a bitter struggle within the Shadow Cabinet. The fight was to protect an incoming Blair administration from the spendthrift promises which devastated Mrs Thatcher's first year. Puncture the Blair helium balloon and it may collapse in a puddle of rubber (amid which glows one gem, an elected mayor for London). But the manifesto is eloquent even in what it does not say. Labour's silence proclaims that 1990s Toryism is safe with Mr Blair and his friends.

That said, I yearn for a thinking person's manifesto, a manifesto for grown-ups, one that debates topics that neither Labour nor the Tories consider suitable for children's viewing. This might include some guide to how each party will balance tax rises against spending cuts to reduce public borrowing; how local and central discretion will be balanced in running schools; what is the "bottom line"



negotiating position at this summer's European summit, where lies the future of farm subsidies and the countryside; what of restricting car use; how should we reform Britain's illiberal, dangerous and unsustainable drugs laws; what future for devolution in Northern Ireland. This is all controversial, and therefore suppressed. Politicians wish to keep such controversy from public view, keep it within the club, even if the club is to change its committee — perhaps especially so.

On television on Wednesday night, the BBC daringly permitted four "ordinary people" a brief moment on stage. The four were women from Worcester, invited to discuss tax allowances for mothers

through the top floor of Eland House, Victoria, where John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, has his office. Gummer, of course, was the man who during the past couple of years of water shortages hounded water companies to repair their leaking pipes and asked the public to bathe in bowls.

● Panic has subsided at the Royal Academy of Arts, in London, where Baroness Thatcher's Spitting Image head mysteriously disappeared from a satirist's exhibition over the Easter weekend. It has just been returned anonymously in a package sent from Royal Tunbridge Wells.

### Hosanna

TAFFETA will feature strongly in Cambridge during the election now that Anna Johnstone, an opera singer, has announced she will be standing for the ProLife Alliance Party. Miss Johnstone, 28, a recent convert to Catholicism, made news two months ago at her London debut in St James's, Piccadilly, when she exhorted the audience to pray along to her Baroque warblings.

Speaking to the Catholic Herald

at home. They did so with a clarity and a scepticism that belied the normal casting of electors as cretins. They were soon cut off. The smile of reason makes bad television. We returned to the studio, to Mr Paxman and Mr Portillo, Mutt and Jeff, Ya and Boo. Yet before the ooze closed back over our heads, we were permitted a sudden sight of blue sky. It was exhilarating.

The media prefers to present lay people as political yobs, like those paraded last week on Channel 4's *Cutting Edge: The Dinner Party*. The subplot of this programme was to show how glibly voters can be with enough drink inside them, and thus how much better it is to leave politics to pundits. I assume the sub-subplot was to show how dangerous elections are, and how sensible Britain is to have fewer than any other country in Europe. Yet I find that when people are invited, and given time, to talk seriously about policy they are more sensible, and certainly more sincere, than the stage-army of the partisan. Anyone who has done jury service will agree that encountering a random selection of fellow citizens can be unnerving. They are almost as intelligent as oneself.

Politics in Britain, as de Tocqueville said, is a club activity. In America it is a civic duty. We read much about British politics becoming more American, but the comparison is usually of leadership campaigns, not of voters. I believe British voters are coming to take elections as seriously as do Americans. This may be one reason why they are more "floating" and more inclined to trouble the pollsters. To treat them as a lumpen proletariat unfit for complex discourse is to patronise and insult them.

The political community may cite Hogarth, Dickens and the Victorian ditty with which I began this piece. But if Gladstone could rouse a half-educated electorate with an erudite two-hour speech, I cannot accept that today's better educated voters must be dismissed with clichés. As politicians go downmarket, they are in danger of passing the electorate on the way up. They may quote Bonar Law's joke: "I am their leader, I must follow them." But the destination need not always be that chosen by the Editors of *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*.

As the band played, Noël Coward gazed into the eyes of Gertrude Lawrence and said how strange it was that "cheap music could be so potent". The assumption of this election campaign is that cheap politics is also potent. I believe this is mistaken. Serve up cheap politics, as the parties did this week, and the electorate will react cheaply. It will impede good government and neuter its practitioners. We can surely afford to be more extravagant with the truth.



Anna Johnstone: stump arias

this week, she admits that pounding the streets of Cambridge on her election campaign is at times "harrowing", but for her politics is not everything: "If I did no more than sing the Ave Maria in different places all over the world," she says, "I'd be happy." After being a parliamentary candidate, her next role will be in *La traviata* in Siberia.

P.H.S

## Fowl play

ALL those chickens on the general election trail have upset the pious souls of the ITN newsmen. While newspapers and the BBC throw themselves ecstatically into the tale of the Tory clucker sent to follow Tony Blair around the country — and its headless counterpart from *The Mirror* — at ITN they were dismayed. Should they, or should they not, cover the chicken story?



That chicken: not serious enough for Michael Brunson



dealing with cat-up-tree yarns. While Coffeemate curdled in their cups, neither side would budge. "The chicken issue became definitive of the whole way the *News at Ten* would be covering the election," said my man by the water cooler. So to prevent a full-blown row, it became necessary to take a vote. The newsmen gathered and the question was put, to cover the chicken or not. The pro-chicken lot won, just.

By way of compromise, however, only the Tory chicken was shown, not the headless *Mirror* one or the other wildlife. "It was very nasty in there for a while," says my insider. "It is not going to get any nicer over the next few weeks. This was about the whole nature of our reporting."

### Easy does it

THERE is a charming lethargy to the election strategy of Peter de Savary, the Referendum candidate for Falmouth and Camborne. While Sebastian Coe, his Tory opponent, limbers up to protect his 3,267 majority, de Savary has decided to take a holiday. A Referendum spokesman believed him to be



"resting" at Skibo, his castle on the northeast coast of Scotland, a long way from Cornwall.

De Savary's daughter Lisa, who represents her father during his absences, explained: "We have decided not to bore the pants off voters with personal image campaigning. My father will embark on that two weeks before the election."

● Distinctly ungallant remarks were made by Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, in front of an embarrassed Gillian Shepherd yesterday. "If these manifestos are supposed to represent the passion of Tony Blair and John

Major," he said, "I have to say I cannot help feeling sympathy for both Cherie and Norma."

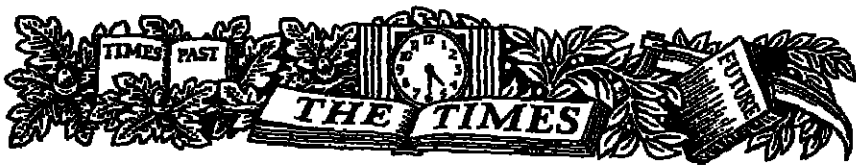
### Water wing

AS though according to a biblical curse, the offices of the hosepipe banners at the Department of the Environment have been flooded. On Wednesday afternoon, staff were ordered home after a burst pipe let gallons of water gush



subey 1001520





## LOST IN TRANSLATION

Blair sounded better in the original English

Gaffes are mistakes. Gaffes are unintended. When Tony Blair told the Scots yesterday that ultimate sovereignty would reside with Westminster after devolution and that, if a parish council could raise tax, so should a Scottish parliament, these were no slips of the tongue. They were a calculated attempt to reassure English voters that a Labour government would not create a leviathan north of the border.

Scottish politicians and journalists have been offended by this. But everything said in Scotland is not aimed only at Scots. Scottish aspirations demand and deserve respect; but policies planned for Scotland are not matters for that nation alone. Scotland is part of the United Kingdom: the audience for Mr Blair's words extends around the country, and the repercussions of devolution will be felt well south of Hadrian's Wall.

Some Scots are angry that elements of the agreement reached in their "constitutional convention" about the right form of devolution have been watered down by Labour. They see this as a betrayal because the convention's proposals were reached by cross-party consensus. Yet there was hardly any English involvement in those negotiations. Labour has to fight an election across the whole of Britain, and this issue has expanded from a Scottish to a British one. English anxieties too have a right to be heard and to be assuaged.

Mr Blair, as it now is clear, did not provocatively compare a Scottish parliament with a parish council: he asked why, if even a parish council was allowed to raise revenue, it should be shocking that a Scottish parliament could do so too? Such words are hardly hostile in sentiment to devolution. This is only an insult if wilfully interpreted as such.

The real trouble lies not in Scotland as a whole but in the Scottish Labour Party which has for some time been the last

bastion of old Labour. It reluctantly voted to replace Clause Four. Its members suspect, rightly, that Mr Blair does not sign up to their purist ambitions for devolution. Now that supporters of the Labour leader have at last managed to win control of the party executive, the "newing" of Scottish Labour is under way, to the fury of the "old". If the executive can control the selection of candidates for the Scottish parliament, then they too are likely to be Blairites.

The Labour leader said yesterday that, even if Scots vote for their parliament to have tax-raising powers, Labour members will undertake not to use them between now and the next general election. This too is anathema to old Labour Scots. They see it as an emasculation of their ambitions and are already trying to portray it as a Westminster veto on Scottish deliberations.

What they most dread is that the powers of the new parliament are going to be weaker than those agreed at the constitutional convention. Each time that Mr Blair says something designed to reassure English voters, they interpret it as backsliding. They may well be right.

Mr Blair, they scoff, simply wants a parliament north of the border that will not cause trouble for him as Prime Minister. He would be sensible to do so, in the interests of the nation as well as of himself. For while a small amount of tension between Westminster and Edinburgh may be unavoidable, even creative, a large amount could indeed lead to the nightmare of which the Conservatives warn. The Scottish Nationalists could exploit discontent as a wedge to achieve full independence.

Scottish devolutionists are understandably disappointed that they may not achieve all that they want, and that they have long awaited from a Labour government. But whatever devolution they get will be a better outcome for them than the status quo.

## THE TALEBAN TACTIC

Dark Ages at home: drug smuggling abroad

Afghanistan is fast disappearing into the primitive obscurity of the 7th century. Each week Radio Shariat, the voice of the bearded Islamic zealots who now rule Kabul, announces arbitrary new decrees. Petty, quixotic and almost comical in their far-fetched interpretation of religious purity, they are, nevertheless, the building blocks of a dictatorship now suffocating the nation.

Photography, television, video players and music are banned because they are contrary to Islam. Kite-flying is a frivolous distraction and prohibited. Football offends religion because it allows men to show their legs. But the most pernicious decrees are those dealing with the status of women.

Thrown out of work, banned from public appearance unless veiled from head to foot, deprived of legal rights, they are obliged to remain secluded at home, the chattels of their menfolk. Kabul's schools have begun a new term without any girls. Women must not wear white socks lest they are attractive to men. House owners must paint over ground-floor windows in case passers-by see a woman inside. Indeed, the Taleban's attitude was summed up by an official in the Attorney General's office: "The face of a woman is a source of corruption for men." Here is a culture suffering not only extreme zealotry but institutionalised misogyny.

Poverty and despair are the breeding grounds of fanaticism. Few countries have suffered more or seen their culture so comprehensively destroyed by alien troops and ideologies than Afghanistan. Its mountains are strewn with millions of mines; its agriculture is ruined; it has been abandoned by the West, forgotten by the strategists and left to its own murderous post-communist civil wars. Ancient tribal and ethnic rivalries

have set clan against clan. For years rockets rained down on the besieged capital as warlords battled for control. The men of the Taleban were successful, not least because they promised peace, stability, unity and an iron discipline.

Like the Khmer Rouge, the Afghan victors are now putting into practice the extremism that fuelled their fighting spirit. This poses a dilemma for the remaining Western agencies. Should the Red Cross and United Nations relief agencies threaten to leave altogether if women's conditions are not improved, or should they remain and attempt to mitigate the new misery?

A less principled dilemma faces policymakers in the West. In the new Great Game, Afghanistan is seen as a way of weakening Iran, whose Shia hierarchy is horrified at being outdone in Islamic zeal by its Sunni neighbours. Western policymakers are quietly backing attempts by Pakistan, long-time backers of the Taleban, to open Afghanistan to trade and transit. Saudi and American interests want to build a gas pipeline from Central Asia. Simply by not condemning their human rights record more forcefully, the United States is giving the new rulers of Kabul free rein.

The calculation is that once law and order are established, the zealots will, under the experience of government, discover pragmatism. There is little to support this hope. More compelling is the evidence that the Taleban are harbouring foreign Islamic revolutionaries and financing their state through a huge new heroin trade. The Taleban tactic is not only to impose an obscurantist regime on its own people: it is also to export even larger quantities of drugs to the world outside.

## WASHINGTON WEDDING

Rates and ratings for the power couple from DC

An American who might legitimately be described as the most powerful man in the world will be married tomorrow. This does not mean that bigamy can join the long list of charges hurled at Bill Clinton by his many opponents. The man about to tie the knot is Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and prime influence upon the level of US interest rates.

The President of the United States certainly looks an impressive figure. He has a big house, a fine plane and a phalanx of secret service agents. Mr Clinton, however, is constrained by Congress, interest groups, public opinion, foreign governments and the Federal Reserve Board. His room for completely independent action is much more modest than it looks. Lyndon Johnson once complained that "the only power I have is nuclear and no one will let me use that".

By contrast, Mr Greenspan has few such limitations. Since his appointment in 1987 he has dominated the world economy. His views determine interest rates, stock market levels, and currency values. Those decisions soon feed through to wallets here in Britain. Every word uttered by Mr Greenspan is analysed thoroughly by the financial community. Normally his vocabulary is deliberately delectable. Many a congressional committee has been completely perplexed by his testimony. When, last December, he described the rise in share values as "irrational exuberance", stock markets around the world briefly crashed.

Now it seems that Mr Greenspan has been experiencing some exuberance of his own. A man of enormous care and caution, he has spent 12 years in the constant company of Andrea Mitchell, one of the best rated television news reporters in the United States. In that time they have established themselves as the premier power couple in Washington. Unexpectedly, he popped the question last Christmas. Even on this occasion his language was so opaque, it is said, that it took three attempts before Ms Mitchell realised he was proposing.

Washington will now have its wedding of the year and is awash with excitement. This is a place of liberal politics and conservative attitudes. While the social scene has coped with its most prominent cohabiting couple, there will be great relief that this 71-year-old man and 50-year-old woman have finally become conventional. Crude New Yorkers will, of course, analyse the ceremony and honeymoon for clues towards interest rate policy. Washingtonians are simply relieved that dinner party etiquette will be more straightforward in future.

Unfortunately, the happy couple are unlikely to be awash with expensive presents. A law passed last year means that a public official may not accept gifts exceeding \$20 in value from anyone with whom he might have professional dealings. In Mr Greenspan's case this means the population of the planet. That sounds like a lot of kettles and toasters.

## Italian case for a force in Albania

From the Chairman of the Italian Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and others

Sir, We cannot accept your suggestion in a leading article today that Italians should "rethink" the Albanian expedition currently being prepared in Rome. The consensus in Italy, as confirmed by a vote in Italy's Lower House yesterday, is that our country cannot just stand by and watch Albania self-destruct.

Our motives for supporting and promoting an international force whose task, as sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council, will be to protect and supervise the distribution of humanitarian aid in Albania, are not, as you say, mere national self-interest — for all that such a motive is in itself perfectly legitimate — but rather the conviction that in the current era of global security the citizens of Albania have every right to expect the international community, and Europe in particular, to shoulder some responsibility for their security and wellbeing.

The sooner this happens, the better for all, as testified by the pressing requests being made by all sides in Albania, even by community leaders in Valona, the port town currently in the hands of armed rebels, from which the ill-fated victims of last week's collision had sailed (report, March 31). It is not in either Italy's or our European partners' interest to allow Albania to become a festering sore in Europe's southern flank, exporting crime and misery across the continent.

Italy, we believe, deserves gratitude both for having taken in, quite alone, over 13,000 refugees and for volunteering to lead a practically difficult mission. In all international humanitarian or peacekeeping missions carried out so far — by common consent, including Somalia — Italy's armed forces have distinguished themselves for their ability in undertaking international police tasks.

Readers of *The Times* should rest assured that neither Italy's Parliament nor, indeed, our international partners in this mission, will consent to an expedition being dispatched without both a clear mandate and a firm agreement on chain of command and division of duties.

Yours sincerely,  
GIAN GIACOMO MIGONE,  
Chairman,  
Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.  
STEFANO BOCCO  
(Verdi Clinic).  
JAS GAWRONSKI  
(Forza Italia).  
SAVERIO SALVATORE PORCARI  
(Alleanza Nazionale).  
SAVERIO VERTONE  
(Forza Italia).  
TANA DE ZULUETA  
(Sinistra Democratica Ulivo).  
Palazzo Madama, 00186 Rome.  
April 3.

## Catholic doctrines

From Mr Richard Bedingfield

Sir, For those of us who sincerely believe in the Catholic faith, it is disturbing to read an article which takes the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church to task as caustically as Tom Murphy does ("A Priest accused of heresy", Body and Mind, April 1).

The Sri Lankan priest, Father Tissa Balasuriya, has openly denounced doctrines which are regarded by the Catholic Church as being part of divinely revealed truth, and the Church therefore has a duty to the faithful around the world to establish that these opinions do not represent authentic Catholic teaching.

Undeniably, it is said that Father Balasuriya should endure excommunication at 72, but how much more of a loss would it be if communities in Sri Lanka and elsewhere were misinformed about the truth as a result of the publication of his book, *On Mary and Human Liberation*.

Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, holds a thankless position in the Vatican. I find it reassuring that he has the courage to fulfil his role by condemning error where it appears.

Yours faithfully,  
RICHARD BEDINGFIELD,  
Oxburgh Hall, King's Lynn, Norfolk.  
April 1.

## Cavalry charges

From Major L. E. N. Neville-Jones

Sir, Like Mr Bridgewater and General Friedberger (letters, March 31) I was surprised to read (report, March 26) that the charge at Omdurman in 1898 "is generally considered to be the last (British Army) cavalry charge". A lot of old Yeomen must turn in their graves every time they hear this suggestion.

For instance, the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, on February 28, 1916, in the Western Desert, found themselves alone on the battlefield faced by the rearguard of a force of Senussi who had invaded Egypt and were under Turkish orders.

The regiment, which could only muster 196 men including the cooks and the farriers respectively with their cleavers and branding irons, charged over three quarters of a mile of firm sand and completely routed the enemy, who numbered more than 500 men with rifles and three machine guns.

Colonel Souter and Lieutenant Blakely, both of whose horses had

## Upholding standards in public life

From Mr Mohamed Al Fayed

Sir, Sir Edward du Cann (letter, April 3) says John Major "deserves credit" for the Nolan committee reforms and the Downey inquiry. There would never have been a Nolan committee but for the disclosures I made, first to the Prime Minister on September 29, 1994, and to the press on October 20, April 3.

I did this in the public interest, notwithstanding the considerable personal and commercial risks involved. Sir Gordon Downey would never have investigated "cash for questions" if I had not forced the issue in front of the Commons Privileges Committee, despite the efforts of some of the members to restrict my testimony when I appeared before it on November 1, 1995.

Sir Edward says I "wasted parliamentary time and taxpayers' money" by making a monstrous allegation against the Home Secretary. Sir Gordon Downey did not see it like that and found no fault with me (report, March 7, later editions). Rather, he said: "I have no reason to think that Mr Al Fayed is not telling the truth as he sees it." He stated: "Mr Al Fayed has discovered fragments of evidence which, when pieced together, seem to support the explanation of a bribe..."

Even though he did not uphold my complaint, Sir Gordon made no criticism which could justify Sir Edward's charge that my complaint was vexatious. His demand that I face "justice"

is rich indeed from a man who, as chairman of Lorrho, led a lengthy parliamentary campaign against me.

Yours faithfully,  
M. AL FAYED,  
Chairman,  
Harrods Ltd, Knightsbridge, SW1.  
April 3.

From Mr Stephen Axby

Sir, I resent the Conservatives saying that they wish to move away from sleaze in order to concentrate on the "real" election issues.

In my view sleaze is a real issue. It is the belief that standards in public life aren't very important to ordinary people that has helped lead so many Tories into trouble in the first place.

Yours etc.  
STEPHEN AXBY,  
40 Heathfield North,  
Twickenham, Middlessex.  
April 3.

From Mr Peter Roxburgh

Sir, I see in today's edition that the Conservative Party is paying somebody to follow Tony Blair dressed as a chicken. Perhaps Mr Blair should respond in kind and pay someone to follow John Major dressed as a large brown envelope?

Yours faithfully,  
P. ROXBURGH,  
9 Festing Road, Putney, SW15.  
April 3.

## Freemasons' role in law and charity

From Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell Syms

Sir, Perhaps the most disquieting element of Masonic influence in the civil courts ("On the square, but are they on the level?", Law, April 1) is that many Masons will deny membership. Without a statutory and supervised register of the interests and membership of the judiciary, the legal professions and court officials, how can listing clerks avoid the risk of perverting the course of justice?

In his letter of March 28 Mr M. B. S. Higham, the Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England, refers to Freemasons' exemption from the Unlawful Societies Act 1799 (obtained by lobbying the then Prime Minister). In fact, this Act, which was repealed in 1967, imposed restrictions on Masons, including registering all members of each lodge with the clerk of the peace.

Is that so different from the Home Affairs Select Committee's latest recommendations (report, March 26) which now have the Masons all of a tizzy?

Yours faithfully,  
E. N. GASKELL SYMS,  
86 Victoria Road,  
Barnet, Hertfordshire.  
April 1.

From Mr J. E. Bloomfield

Sir, As a Mason, a Rotarian and former member of the Round Table (you have to retire at 40), I know that all three of these organisations have common aims of fellowship (or brotherhood), goodwill to all men and charity.

It is obligatory for Round Tablers and Rotarians to wear lapel badges. Such badges are available for Masons but it is not obligatory to wear them.

Masons contribute significantly to local charities, many of them non-Masonic. Virtually every hospice in the land receives annually large measures of Masonic monetary support. Masons go quietly about their support for worthy causes and do not advertise.

There is, locally, a boat which offers free trips for disabled people. Embazoned on it are Rotary, Round Table and Lions logos. It is also supported by a local lodge, but this is only shown in the boat-owner's accounts.

Yours faithfully,  
JOHN BLOOMFIELD,  
(Past Master, Lodge of Concord, Southampton).  
Reynolds Cottage,  
Mill Lane, Brockenhurst, Hampshire.  
April 2.

## Farmers and hunting

From Mr James Crosbie Dawson

Sir, Mr G. W. Baron (letter, March 28) is surely naive to suggest that one of the reasons why farmers plant and preserve hedgerows, copses, etc. is their "natural respect for a varied and attractive countryside". A few may do this. Most do so because of the sporting benefits that such habitats produce.

Speaking personally, I could easily run my farm without any hedges and would probably farm better as a result. The reduction in the herbivore population would undoubtedly benefit the crops.

Anyone who doubts the feasibility of farming without trees should take a trip through the grain-growing areas of northern France, where every square metre is cropped. The crops look magnificent and yield accordingly.

Any attempt to restrict field sports by legislation will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on the countryside as we know it, and in many cases could only ever be partially effective. Hunting, shooting, etc. will always go hand in hand with conservation.

Yours faithfully,  
J. CROSBIE DAWSON,  
Northampton Farm,  
Overton, Hampshire.  
April 3.

## 'Completing' Elgar

From Mr Raymond Monk

Sir, Mr Paul Grafion's letter (March 29), which sought to justify the Elgar family's support for the "completion" by Anthony Payne of Elgar's Third Symphony, was in my view unfair to the memory of the composer's daughter, Carice Elgar Blake. Carice, who was my friend, was not, as Mr Grafion suggests, in any way responsible for the present highly unsatisfactory situation. The agreement she signed in July 1934 with Sir John Reith (acting on behalf of the BBC) was specifically designed to prevent any such "hinkering" with the sketches. The relevant clause being:

"The Corporation for itself its successors and assigns hereby undertakes and agrees that none of the said manuscripts shall ever be published either in whole or in part and that they will not permit any person whatever to have access to the said manuscripts for the purpose of finishing or completing or making any alteration."

Perhaps, therefore, it is the BBC which should be called to account in this matter and not my late friend, who did everything possible to meet her father's dying wish.

Yours faithfully,  
RAYMOND MONK (Senior Trustee,  
The Elgar Foundation, Leicester).  
19 Severn Street, Leicester.  
March 31.

1997, a new armour replacement regiment was formed at Bovington — The Dorset Yeomanry.

Yours sincerely,  
EDWARD NEVILLE-JONES,  
(General Organiser and Honorary Archivist, Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry & Dorset Garrison Old Comrades Association),  
Alderm House,  
68 Blake Hill Crescent,  
Lilliput, Poole, Dorset.  
April 2.

From Mrs Joan Whateley

Sir, I was particularly interested in Mr Bridgewater's letter. My grandfather, Major W. H. King, of the 21st Lancers, took part in the Omdurman charge of 1898 and my father, Lieutenant F. H. King, of the Warwickshire Yeomanry, took part in the charge of 1917 against the Turkish guns at Huj, near Gaza.

Yours faithfully,  
JOAN WHATELEY (née King),  
Rosemary,  
Walker's Green, Marden, Hereford.  
April 1.

## How loyal readers earn their prizes

From the Editor of New Innkeeper Magazine

Sir, The topic of reader competitions (Mr J. F. K. Hinder's letter, April 2) causes some hilarity, as well as serious concern, among journalists in the trade press where, if the competition is too simple, reader response can be in inverse proportion to the value of the prize.

A fellow editor confesses having had no entries whatsoever for a competition offering an all-expenses-paid VIP week for two in Chicago. The questions for this competition, like that noted by Mr Hinder, contained all the answers. On another market-leading magazine which I once edited (circulation 36,000), we could receive seven or eight entries for simple competitions with very attractive prizes such as VIP weekends in European capitals. However, at the same time we attracted a truly outstanding 600 responses to a competition for which the top prize was a Guinness T-shirt.

Not surprisingly, our conclusion is that if the competition is simple, make the prize "winable" — i.e. modest. And if the prize is valuable make readers work for it. This magazine has just sent a group of eight readers on an all-paid week in New Orleans as a prize to a competition; but entrants had to submit to a six-months-long postal "Business Game", with the aim of helping publicans develop new business skills. Just under 1,000 people joined in (6 per cent of circulation).

The moral is: enter newspaper competitions — the odds are better than the lottery.

Yours faithfully,  
ANDREW PALMER, Editor,  
New Innkeeper Magazine,  
The British Institute of Innkeeping,  
Wessex House,  
80 Park Street, Camberley, Surrey.  
April 3.

## Seek and fail to find

From Mr Richard Exworthy

Sir, Mr John Murphy (letter, April 2) bemoans the poor state of leadership and standard set by those in positions of trust and authority and asks from what source he should seek better examples.

I suggest that he looks at my two children, aged three and six. They seem less confused than their parents; understand each other better than their teachers; enjoy better health than their doctors; are incapable of real sin; possess more self-confidence than any psychiatrist; and have clearer thought than a guru.

Only with politicians do they compare. Children are self-serving, devious and never to be trusted. Thankfully they are such hopeless liars that we always know whether to believe them. It appears, however, that with politicians we sometimes have to wait until after we have voted for them before we learn the truth.

Yours faithfully,  
R. EXWORTHY,  
24 Agate House,  
Denmark Road, Kingston, Surrey.  
April 2.

From Mr Michael Allen

Sir, I am fortunate of the generation that has the answer to John Murphy's question.

It is — "within yourself".

Yours sincerely,  
MICHAEL ALLEN,  
44 Campden Hill Court,  
Campden Hill Road, W8.  
April 2.

From Mr S. J. Traynor

Sir, Mr Murphy despairs at the lack of a good role model for his life.

Try Jesus!

Yours faithfully,  
S. J. TRAYNOR,  
74 Conrad Road, Witham, Essex.  
April 2.

## Small is beautiful

From Mr Alan Millard

Sir, Thank you for featuring Rutland (report and photographs, March 31) with its delightful motto *Multum in parvo* — a lot in a little. As I am only five feet four inches tall, with a tendency towards roundity, I have decided to adopt the motto for myself.

Yours sincerely,  
ALAN MILLARD,  
8 Medina Court,  
Marine Parade West,  
Lee-on-the-Solent, Hampshire.  
April 1.

## Bit of a mix-up

From Mrs Rae Michaelis

Sir, Atheists and physicists perhaps share the same confusion (letters, March 19, 25, 27). Niels Bohr, the Danish nuclear physicist and Nobel prizewinner, often shared his favourite story as follows:

A physicist hung a horseshoe on the door of his laboratory. His surprised colleagues asked whether he thought it would bring him luck in his experiments. "No, I don't believe in superstitions," he said, "but I have been told that it works even if you don't believe in it."

Yours faithfully,  
RAE MICHAELIS,  
Lyndfield,  
2d Lynwood Grove, Orpington, Kent.  
April 1.







## OBITUARIES

## NORMAN CARR



Norman Carr, MBE, conservationist, died in South Africa on April 1 aged 84. He was born on July 19, 1912.

Norman Carr was by no means the vainest of men, but he leaves behind him a monument that makes the Great Pyramid of Cheops look like a purple. No mere pile of bricks for Carr; his monument covers more than 14,000 square kilometres.

Its name is the Luangwa Valley in Zambia, a southern extension of the great African Rift which is cut through by the Luangwa River, a tributary of the Zambezi. This is divided principally into two national parks. They are considered by many to be the finest national parks in Africa.

There is hardly anything in the Luangwa Valley upon which Carr has not left his mark. Today it is one of the richest wildlife destinations on the planet, holding impressive populations of elephant and lion. It is also, because of Carr's innovative mind, the best place in Africa to see leopard.

Carr's belief was in tourism. Tourists, he realised, brought foreign exchange, valuable to a country emerging from colonial rule. He saw the "dollar value" of wildlife. Carr also worked right from the beginning to make sure that local villagers profited from the richness of the wildlife. He wanted it to become a source of local income and local pride.

This policy is now a commonplace of conservation worldwide, but it has only recently become the standard

practice of international organisations. Carr was promoting such policies in the 1950s.

But Carr was much more than a practical administrator or a master of the tourist industry. He was, quintessentially, a man of the bush. He had a fierce and unquenchable love for the world's wild places, and it was in the bush that he always felt himself most at home.

A few years ago Carr was taking a group of tourists on a walking safari, in the company of an armed game scout, when they had the misfortune to be charged by an angry lioness. The game scout fired five shots, but the beast was not deterred by the warning. Even when it was hit in the leg it did not turn back. Meanwhile, Carr had rounded up his walking party and established

them on the top of a termite mound. The lioness made her attack. Carr, a slight man then in his late sixties, fought the lioness off with his walking stick. It was thanks to his courage that no one was harmed.

Norman Joseph Carr was born in Mozambique and educated in England, but emerged without a single academic qualification. In 1939 he was appointed elephant control officer in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia; the following year, after the outbreak of the Second World War, he joined the King's African Rifles, and served in Abyssinia, finishing with the rank of captain.

After the war, he became a game-ranger back in Northern Rhodesia. In 1950 he opened the first tourist camp in that country. He established hunting safaris operated by Game Department staff, making it a priority that local people received both money and meat from the enterprise.

He was the first warden of the country's first National Park, the Kafue. Here he raised two lion cubs, Big Boy and Little Boy, and took them with him wherever he went. Within four years, the pair were capable of killing for themselves and Carr celebrated this in one of his six books, *Return to the Wilds*. Interestingly, Carr's wife, Barbara, wrote a kind of counterblast to this, a book called *Not for the Wilds*. The life of the bush never appealed to her and she and her husband were later to live very separate lives.

In 1960 Carr went to report on the tourist potential of the Luangwa Valley. He subsequently retired from the Game Department and started up his own safari operations. Thus, as Northern Rhodesia became independent Zambia in 1964, the Luangwa Valley turned from a forgotten wilderness to a tourist Mecca without ceasing for a second to be utterly wild.

The great thing about Carr, however, was not simply his love of the bush, but his delight in sharing it. He did not want to keep it for himself; he knew that way spelt ultimate destruction. He inaugurated the idea of the walking safari: the last great adventure in which large beasts relate to human walkers not as intruders, but as one mammal to another. Carr also initiated the idea of night drives, in which the nocturnal life of the bush can be seen in a powerful spotlight. This helped to make the leopard, normally the most elusive of beasts, one of the star attractions of the valley.

But if Carr was one of the last of the "old Africa hands", he was also one of the pioneers of the new Africa. In changing economic and political times, he saw a conservationist opportunity and made it work — to the benefit of the country, of the local people, of the visitors and, perhaps most importantly, to the benefit of the wildlife itself.

He is survived by his wife and by their son and two daughters.

## JOLIE GABOR



Jolie Gabor (right) with her daughters Eva (left) and Zsa Zsa (centre)

Jolie Gabor, Hungarian socialite and businesswoman, died on April 1 aged 96. She was born on September 29, 1900.

JOLIE GABOR was the mother of the three Gabor sisters — Zsa Zsa, Eva and Magda — who captivated Hollywood society during the 1930s. More of an Auntie Mame character than a conventional mother, she instilled her daughters with that shrewd, feminine approach to life which proved so useful to them in their minor film careers and advantageous marriages. "Momma trained us to look on ourselves as we would a diamond, appraising only its value, brilliance and ultimate setting," was how Eva described it.

Diamonds were a leitmotif of the Gabor family. So were clouds of blonde hair and scent, delightful Hungarian accents and half-inch-long artificial eyelashes. As a young bride Jolie had wanted only sons, but having produced daughter after daughter she bowed to fate and set about raising her girls to be charming and accomplished. "I wanted them to play the piano so magnificently that I would be green with envy," she said. "They learnt to swim, to ride, to play tennis. They all went to the best finishing schools. Who wants a man who wants a dowry?"

Frustrated personal ambition may have played a part in

Jolie's aspirations for her daughters. Jolie Kende grew up in Budapest, where her father owned a jewellery business. She was born at the turn of the century but never admitted to it, reasoning (like Oscar Wilde) that it looked calculating for a woman to be quite truthful about her age.

Her education consisted of nannies, boarding school and a Swiss finishing school and was intended to equip her for a good marriage. Instead, she pleaded unsuccessfully for permission to become an actress and, when her parents said no, decided that the best escape was to find a man.

Her first marriage — "a disaster" — was to William Gabor, a businessman twice her age. He initially agreed to a divorce after six months, to leave her free to pursue a career on the stage. But, swiftly falling pregnant, she had to stall her plans. She opened a jewellery shop instead and it was to be 22 years before she finally divorced Gabor.

Of her daughters, who all arrived in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, Eva always wanted to act, Magda never, and Zsa Zsa drifted into the profession. But it was the last who showed the real talent for self-promotion. Not long after arrival in New York, she married the hotel magnate Conrad Hilton and called her mother to join her. The newly divorced Jolie arrived with only \$100 in cash, a

sable coat and a 30-carat diamond ring. But Hilton's money enabled her to open jewellery stores in Madison Avenue and Palm Springs.

Her apartment on the Upper East Side was much visited by her daughters' suitors after the war, and her fridge bulged with orchids and bottles of champagne.

Her matrimonial history was as chequered as that of her daughters. There was a second marriage, so brief that the family affected not to remember the man's name, and a long happy third marriage, in 1957, to Count Edmond de Szegethy whom Jolie had known ever since Budapest days.

He had arrived in America in 1956 with only \$27 to his name, and immediately spent \$20 on flowers for Jolie — an act of such rash generosity that Jolie felt compelled to marry him. Like all Hungarians, he worshipped beauty, and kept his wife on a regime of vitamin pills and expensive face creams. Whether because of these, good genes or more drastic surgical measures, Jolie remained remarkably youthful-looking well into old age.

Her own buoyant self-confidence was probably the greatest gift Jolie gave to her daughters.

She is survived by two of them, Zsa Zsa and Magda. Her husband died in 1989 and her youngest daughter Eva in 1995.

## ERIK NELSON

Erik Nelson, aviator, died in Maryland on March 20 aged 89. He was born in Warwickshire on March 24, 1907.

ERIK NELSON had the heart of an artist and the mind of an engineer. If he excelled as a designer of aircraft, his greatest pride and pleasure always came when he could test out his own designs as a pilot. His expertise in the field of aviation was to prove of great value, not only to the RAF during the Second World War, but later to the commercial airline industry.

Erik Blyth Nelson was born in Warwickshire. He was educated at St Edward's

School, Oxford, where he distinguished himself in the chapel choir. But an adolescence during which he spent the equivalent of three days a week in chapel disinclined him from becoming a regular churchgoer in later life.

It was motorbikes which fascinated him as a schoolboy. When he was still under-age, he bought an old bike for £5. Although a headlong crash with another cyclist landed him in trouble with the law, it made him something of a hero at St Edward's.

Nelson won a choral scholarship to study music at New College, Oxford. He showed some talent for composition and was a competent pianist,

but he knew that he would never be a professional player or composer. Not wanting to teach piano to "snooty-nosed kids" for the rest of his life, he decided to leave New College after his first year. Promising that he would knuckle down to work, he persuaded his father to buy him an apprenticeship with Alfred Herbert, machine tool-makers in Coventry.

He went on to take a job as service manager for the motorbike manufacturers Burney & Blackburne. He raced professionally at the Brooklands track and for seven years was awarded the gold star given to those who won races at speeds averaging more than 100mph.

In 1930 the company went bankrupt and Nelson moved on to work for the flying school at Brooklands. Joining the RAF Reserve he gained his licences to fly, repair and inspect aircraft. He became manager of the A.V. Roe depot at London Airport, Heston, and in 1933 became chief flight instructor at the college of aeronautical engineering in London. He also worked for a year as a stunt pilot for Cobham's Flying Circus.

In 1934 Nelson was sent by the Colonial Office to Hong Kong as aviation adviser to construct and manage what has become Kai Tak International Airport. There he became an expert in Sunderland flying boats for 230 Squadron.

RAF. But informally he worked with a friend for Pan American Airways, scouting its Pacific routes.

Nelson loved life in Hong Kong where, outside his work, he led a glamorous colonial life, riding to hounds and partying wildly as well as keeping up with the theatre world which had always interested him. Nelson remained a lifelong friend of Laurence Olivier who had been at school with him and he was also a friend of Noel Coward.

With the outbreak of war in the Far East, Nelson was called to active duty by the RAF. He flew patrols across the South China Sea and Indian Ocean for a while, before being recalled to Britain at the end of 1940 where he served briefly with Bomber Command. It was soon discovered, however, that he had considerable experience as a test pilot and instructor and he was taken off Bomber Command and set to work training new pilots. He found it a stressful job. Of one batch of 19 Poles sent to be trained by him, seven killed themselves.

He was relieved, therefore, when his expertise with flying boats was brought to Lord Beaverbrook's attention and he was removed from his instructor's post. London at that time was seeking ways to manage its difficult and dangerous cross-Atlantic com-

munications and Nelson was posted to Baltimore to manage the BOAC flying boat base used for the VIP transport service. He flew Winston Churchill, Lord Beaverbrook and other leading members of the War Cabinet.

In early 1944 he was transferred to Montreal, Canada, to manage the Return Ferry Service which flew new and repaired US and Canadian-made aircraft to Britain for use by Bomber Command, as



Then, in 1950, Nelson decided to emigrate to America. There he managed the East Coast, Canadian, Latin American and Caribbean sales operations of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. In 1961 he became president of Lockheed in Canada.

Nelson retired in 1970, though he was always to maintain his interest in the aviation industry. In 1978 he served as special counsel to a US congressional committee investigating aircraft safety. And in 1986, the Chinese Government, finding that Nelson was still alive, flew him out to Hong Kong to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Kai Tak Airport.

In retirement he lived in Maryland. He would attend Formula One races until old age, often meeting former colleagues there. He wrote prolifically for local newspapers on anything from UFOs, in which he believed passionately, to the aircraft which he had always loved. He also continued both to listen to and to play music. He had a Steinway in his drawing room.

Though the last half of his life had been spent in America, he remained an Englishman to the end, taking a teasing delight in mispronouncing American words.

He is survived by his wife Jane and their two sons.

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INSIDE  
SECTION  
**2**  
TODAY

Monday  
Tuesday  
Wednesday  
Thursday  
Friday

## WORKING WEEK

Hanging on for  
a transatlantic  
connection  
PAGE 27



## BUSINESS

Graham Searjeant  
on the perils  
facing payouts  
PAGE 29



## SPORT

Richard Dunwoody  
on his strategy  
for tackling Aintree  
PAGES 41-48

**THE HIDDEN  
ASSETS OF  
BANKS IN  
PICCADILLY**  
PAGE 27

SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

## DTI may launch Maid share deal inquiry

By ROBERT MILLER



Wagner: company is target

THE Department of Trade and Industry is understood to be considering an investigation into share deals in Maid, the online information company.

Since Maid made its stock market debut in 1994 the company's share price has been as low as 45p and as high as 35p. Yesterday Maid shares closed up 4p at 204p. The Trade and Industry Department is believed to have been passed the Maid file after an investigation by the Stock Exchange.

Under City rules the Stock Exchange's monitoring and surveillance unit automatically investigates any unusual share deals or price fluctuations. These rarely lead to any further action being taken.

If, however, market abuse is suspected the Stock Exchange passes the file to the Trade and Industry Department, which then decides whether to use its more wide-ranging powers to launch a formal investigation.

In February, Dan Wagner, 34, chief executive and founder of Maid, claimed that his company's share price had been forced down by sophisticated international short-selling.

Between October last year and the first week in February this year alone the company's share price went from 310p to 150p.

Mr Wagner said that he had made a statement at the time after ABN Amro Hoare Govett, Maid's broker, had noticed "a large majority of foreign share sales coming through companies based in Jersey, Monte Carlo and Lichtenstein".

It is believed that after Maid's share price fell and the company's statement the Stock Exchange began an investigation as it was bound to do. Last night the Stock Exchange declined to comment. The Trade and Industry Department said: "We neither confirm nor deny whether an investigation is being conducted into an individual or a company."

Mr Wagner told *The Times* yesterday: "We would very much hope that the proper authorities will investigate these events. We are trying to run a business and a successful one. But we have become the target for share manipulators."

He added: "These people are damaging small investors who believe in Maid by spreading rumours that are untrue so that they can line their own pockets. What they are doing is not only illegal but immoral as well. The practice should be stamped out."

## French no to bid by GEC for Thomson

By ADAM SAGE IN PARIS AND OLIVER AUGUST

THE French Government has snubbed a £1.2 billion takeover bid by GEC for Thomson-CSF, the defence electronics group that is to be privatised soon.

The French Finance Ministry said yesterday that it would refuse to consider the offer made last week by the British industrial group, claiming the sale of Thomson's defence arm to a foreign company would be contrary to the national security interest.

GEC said that the French decision was undermining European consolidation efforts in the defence sector in the face of a renewed onslaught by US rivals that had consolidated already.

Lord Prior, GEC chairman, said: "The fragmented structure of the European defence electronics industry will not sustain a strong competitive position in world markets in the next century. This can be achieved only through an integrated capability efficient in its operations and effective in the deployment of its resources."

French ministers insisted foreign groups were welcome, but only as subordinates. They emphasised President

Chirac's determination to see a "national defence champion" emerge from the sell-off. The GEC rejection will be welcomed by the two French companies bidding for the 58 per cent Thomson stake, Alcatel-Alsthom, the telecommunications company, Lagardère, the defence to media group.

Analysts said GEC's attempt to outbid Alcatel and Lagardère was a very long shot. But the dismissive nature of the Paris response is likely to fuel cross-Channel tensions. With President Chirac describing the privatisation as an essential part of European defence industry restructuring, many analysts expected Paris to consider, if not accept, GEC's proposal.

However, the GEC bid was seen by the Government as an embarrassment as well as a snub to GEC's French partner, Alcatel-Alsthom.

The French Government said it wanted GEC to open discussions with Lagardère and Alcatel with a view to participating in their offers.

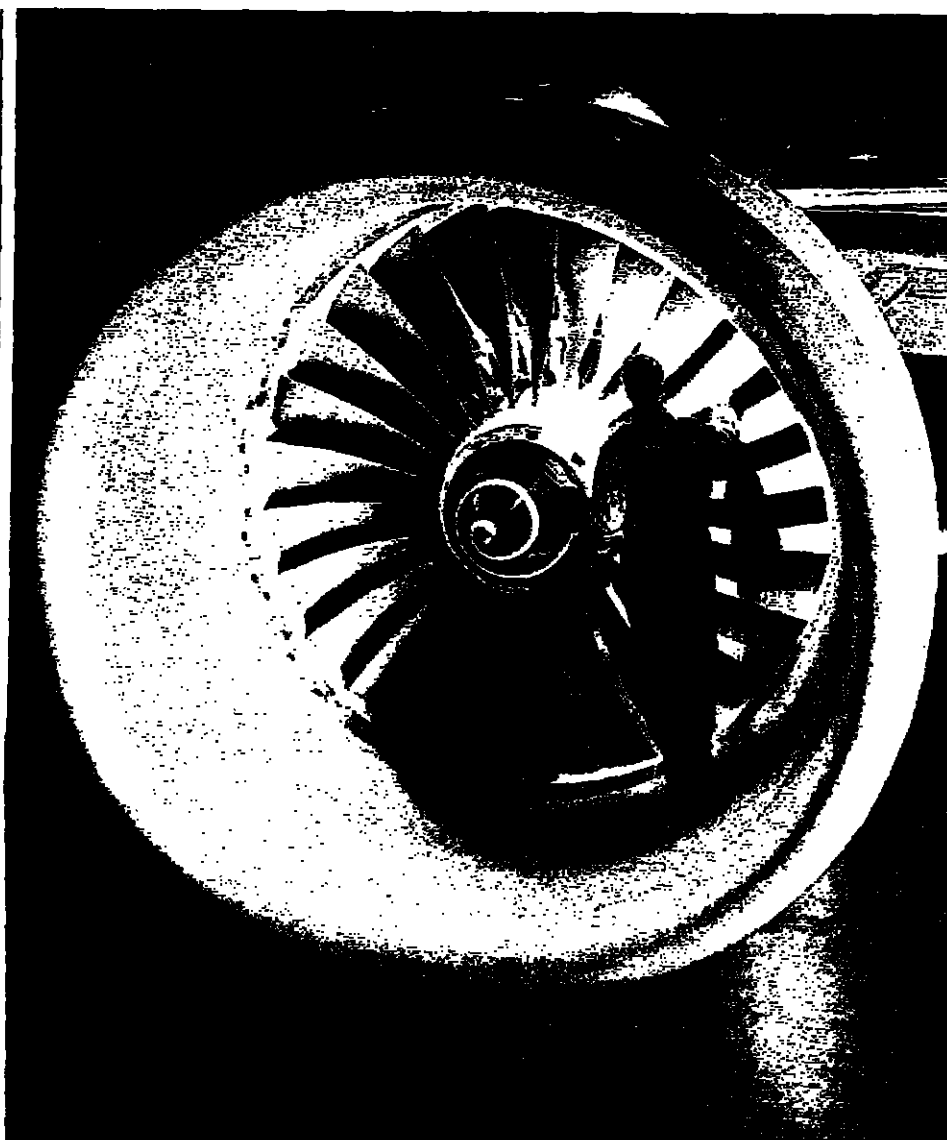
In Paris, analysts expressed concern that by adopting a stance that will be portrayed as intransigent, France could damage its chances of placing itself at the centre of European defence industry restructuring.

South Korea reacted angrily last year when the original privatisation procedure was stopped amid protests over a plan to sell Thomson's consumer electronics arm, Thomson Multimedia, to Daewoo.

In its second attempt the Government decided to split Thomson, hoping for a speedy and uncontroversial sale of the defence electronics branch.

The Finance Ministry confirmed that it would consider the bids by Alcatel and Lagardère. Alcatel has reinforced its chances by forging an alliance with Dassault, the defence group. Final offers are due by May 7, with the Finance Ministry saying it wants to make a decision on Thomson-CSF by June.

Tempus, page 28



Delta has selected Rolls-Royce's Trent 800 engine to power its fleet of Boeing 777 jets

## Delta deal opens up America to Rolls-Royce

By OLIVER AUGUST

ROLLS-ROYCE has made a big breakthrough in the American market with Delta Airlines selecting the UK-made Trent 800 engine to power its fleet of Boeing 777 jets in a deal that could be worth £200 million.

Delta is the first US airline to select the Trent 800 engine for the 777 and the agreement could open up the booming American aviation market for Rolls-Royce.

A spokeswoman said: "This could have a 20-year knock-on effect. The Trent 800 was chosen because it is a superior engine. It is particularly welcome as it comes from Delta, which flies more customers than any other airline."

Last month Delta announced an long-term agreement with Boeing for firm orders and options for more than 600 aircraft, including options to purchase ten 777s. Rolls-Royce said the number could rise.

Rolls-Royce currently supplies the engines for about 30 per cent of the existing 777s.

The Trent 800, the version of the 800 series ordered by Delta, has completed its test phase and is waiting for certification from the US government.

## Abbey pays N&P chief £700,000

By CAROLINE MERRELL

THE former chief executive of the National & Provincial Building Society has been made redundant from the Abbey National with a £700,000 pay-off.

Alastair Lyons, who was chief executive of N&P when it was taken over by the Abbey last year, is to become chief executive of another financial services company. His appointment will be announced this month.

Mr Lyons's pay-off represents more than two-and-a-half times his annual salary of £250,000. He had been with the society for six years.

Mr Lyons said: "I have always made it clear that I wanted to be chief executive of another company, having been chief executive of the N&P. I wanted to make sure that the N&P was fully integrated with the Abbey before making my move."

Mr Lyons said the post involved moving from Yorkshire.

## Halifax targets savers with loyalty package

By CAROLINE MERRELL

HALIFAX Building Society has fired the first shots in a savings war triggered by the stock market flotation of four of the UK's biggest building societies.

The society has launched a loyalty package to secure the custom of its seven million savers that includes discounts on personal loans, special rates for existing mortgage customers moving home, holiday discounts and free financial advice.

Savers have effectively been locked in to the society since it announced its flotation at the end of 1994. They risked losing their share entitlement, worth on average £1,300, if they moved their savings elsewhere.

When the flotation was announced, the Halifax was paying interest at a rate of 4.5 per cent on £5,000 in its instant access account, and 4.65 per cent on a similar

amount in its 90-day account. The Halifax's instant access Liquid Gold account now pays 2.95 per cent interest, while its 90-day Solid Gold account pays 3.25 per cent on a £5,000 investment.

Higher rates are available elsewhere. The Portman pays interest of 4.5 per cent, while the Bradford & Bingley pays 4.8 per cent and Direct Line 4.5 per cent on instant access savings. A Portman saver gets 52 per cent more interest than one with the Halifax.

The Halifax says that its savers have been free to move all but £100 of their savings since February 24 and claims that there has not yet been any significant outflow of funds.

All societies are waiting to see what happens when the Alliance & Leicester makes its stock market debut on April 21.

Weekend Money, page 34

## Eleven quit Capital Corp HQ

By KEITH RODGERS

ELEVEN head office staff have departed en masse from Capital Corporation, the casino operator fighting a £191 million takeover bid from London Clubs International, raising questions about the company's financial and management controls.

The departures, said to be linked to a dispute over bonus payments, leave a large hole in a department responsible for finance, purchasing, security, and general administration. The company, which has been without a full-time financial director for 18 months, employs just 30 people at head office.

The walkout throws the spotlight back on Capital's internal controls, which

Carry Nesbitt, the chairman, acknowledged were "unsatisfactory" in the 1996 interim report. Last year, the company called in independent consultants in an attempt to strengthen its gaming and financial controls. It has since indicated that the controls have been tightened up.

Although the 11 members of staff only left on Tuesday, the company insisted "they have since been replaced under our existing heads of department." It refused to comment on whether the replacements were temporary. A spokesman added: "This has had no impact on our day-to-day operations and it's very much business as usual."

Capital, which runs Crockfords, one of the oldest private gaming clubs, and the

Colony Club, has rejected the London Clubs offer as "derisory". Capital blamed a drop in pre-tax profits in 1996 from £13.1 million to £9.2 million in part on one-off costs resulting from consultancy reviews. The figures were also hit by low levels of high roller activity in the final quarter and exceptional costs from the temporary closure of one of its two casinos.

Yesterday, Mercury Asset Management, a major investor in both companies, bought 165,000 shares at 195p in Capital, taking its stake to 17.5 per cent. It sold 22,500 shares in London Clubs at 410p. London Clubs, whose shares closed at 408p, is offering 47 shares for every 100 in Capital, valuing each share at 191p. Capital shares closed at 200p.

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## BUSINESS ROUNDUP

The first occupants move into BA's new building just before Christmas.

**CALEDONIA** INVESTMENT yesterday declared a supplementary dividend of 30p to mark growth in shareholders' funds. The payment will be made to shareholders who bought stock by the close of business on Thursday. A second interim dividend of 12.5p has also been declared, replacing the final dividend. This will make the total dividend 19p (18p), for the year ended March 31. Both the supplementary dividend and second interim dividend will be paid on May 1.

## Investor: Bank (UK) Limited, Cannon Bridge, 25 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 3AT. TIM/5/4/97

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## A WORKING WEEK FOR: JERRY TAYLOR

## Hanging on for a transatlantic connection

Eric Reguly finds that the chief executive of MCI is hungry to lead the street fighter of US telecoms into its £12bn merger with BT

Monday  
Tuesday  
Wednesday  
Thursday  
Friday

IT IS hard to imagine two executives as different as Sir Peter Bonfield and Jerry Taylor. Bonfield, knighted, cosmopolitan and impeccably dressed, is the chief executive of British Telecom, a company that is still struggling to shake off its monopolistic heritage. Taylor — squat, refreshingly unpolished, a US Air Force veteran and friend of Mike Milken, the notorious junk-bond king — is chief executive of MCI, the street fighter of the US phone industry that has bloodied AT&T's nose.

They are a potential culture clash in the making. Bonfield and Taylor have been thrust together to run Concert, the company to be formed later this year by BT's £12 billion takeover of MCI, America's second-largest long-distance carrier. Bonfield will be chief executive of the global powerhouse. Taylor will take the president and chief operating officer titles.

There is no question about who will be in charge. "Peter's the boss," Taylor says without hesitation. But Bonfield will have to tread lightly. Executives loyal to Taylor will occupy many of the top positions at Concert and he will have MCI's interests close to heart. It has been his employer for almost three decades.

Taylor, furthermore, doesn't really need the job. BT's takeover of MCI will make him far richer than he already is. What Taylor spends on a single fill-up for *Odin*, his 50-foot sportfisher yacht, would buy Bonfield a year's worth of designer suits. Taylor is to receive some \$44 million for his MCI shares and options. His annual salary at Concert will be \$700,000.

Telecoms executives and analysts don't think melding BT and MCI will be easy. But they don't expect the cultural differences to wreck the union. BT, they note, is hardly leaping into the fray. It has owned 20 per cent of MCI since 1994 and spent a lot of time getting to know its people, products and strategy. "Friends & Family", BT's successful discount package, was an MCI invention.

While Bonfield and Taylor could have been born on different planets, it is also wrong to assume that BT and MCI are miles apart culturally. BT is competing in the world's most liberal telecoms market and has learnt to move quickly. John Turnbull, an analyst at Société Strauss Turnbull Securities, said BT was positively nimble in comparison to its old self. "BT, 13 years after privatisation, has moved a helluva long way from the regulated utility it once was."

Taylor agrees: "Peter Bonfield is more aggressive than many MCI people."

Taylor, 55, joined MCI, then known as Microwave Communications Inc, in 1969. He was its sixth employee. He was born in a small town in Michigan. His father was an inventor who specialised in chemicals and developed the substance

used to kill the lampreys that wiped out the salmon stocks in the Great Lakes.

Like many young men of his era, the armed forces provided his escape route. He became a communications expert in the US Air Force, had a posting in Okinawa, Japan, studied physics at San Francisco State University and ended up teaching there. When the time came to find a paying career, he took a gamble on MCI. At the time, MCI had more to do with litigation than telecommunications. Taylor said: "We were a law office with an antenna on the roof."

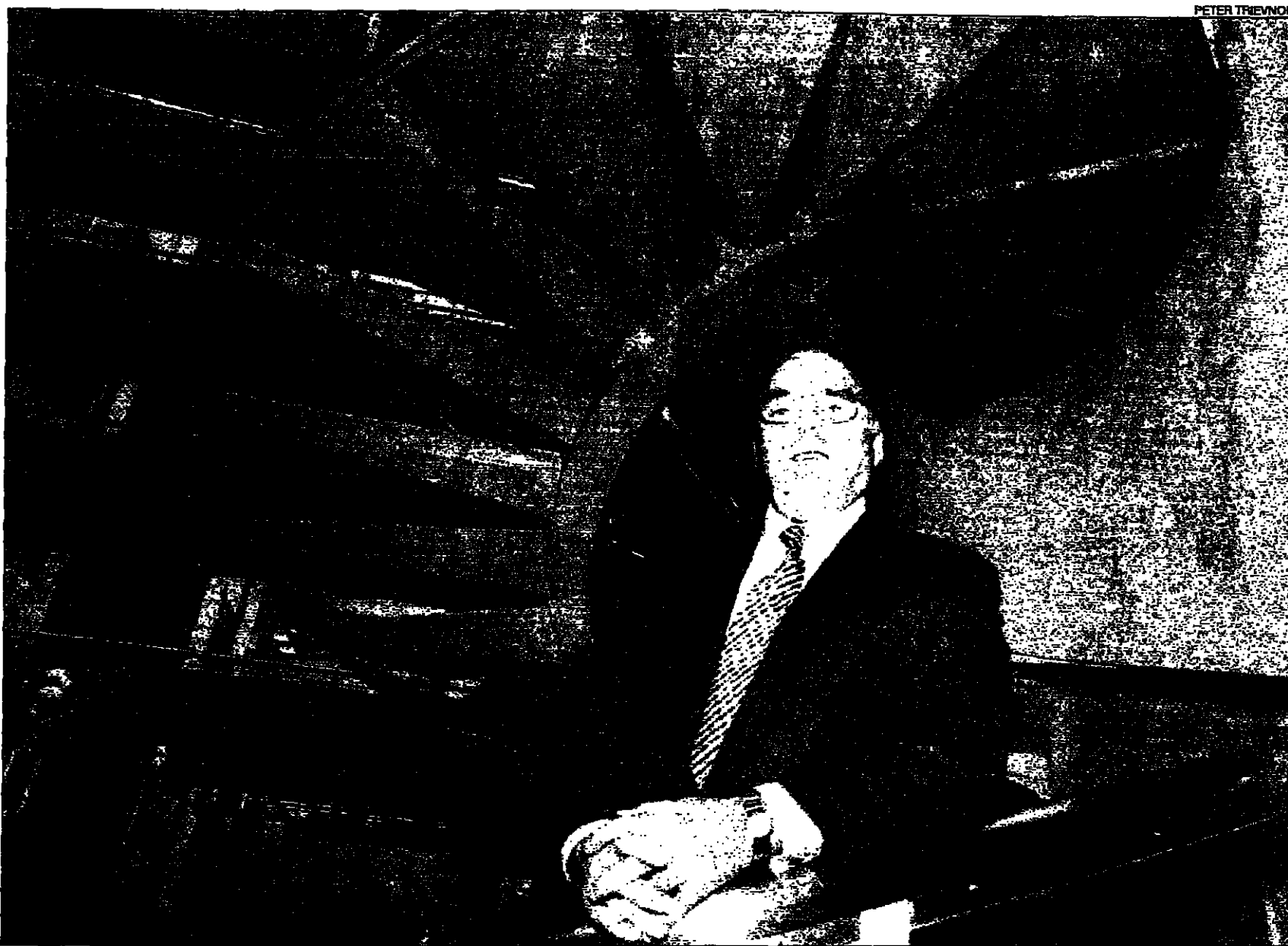
Indeed, mighty American Telephone & Telegraph, through its regional Bell companies, had a hammerlock on the domestic phone services. But the monopoly was always under attack. In the 1960s, regulatory changes allowed companies such as MCI to build networks in an effort to break into the long-distance market. It wasn't easy.

The Bell companies were not about to let a business they had owned since the turn of the century slide away and, in that great American tradition, they defended their turf in the courts. "We had a lot of lawsuits," Taylor remembers. "Once in Texas, the Bell company disconnected our business on the grounds that our service was not authorised — not authorised by them, that is."

Although MCI scored a string of court victories, it was never confident about its future in the early years. Every business customer — it had no residential business at the time — was hard won and virtually every spare dollar went to finance lawsuits. The company, which raised \$30 million in its 1972 flotation, had a negative net worth throughout the 1970s.

Taylor nonetheless was having the time of his life. In his first few years at MCI, he wrote the regulatory applications for operating licences, then switched to the sales side. MCI was enjoying its underdog status and captured the imagination of the upstart companies which loved to hate AT&T and the Bell companies. "The Government needed a catalyst for change," Taylor said. "We were successful in that sense. AT&T was great to have them as an enemy." (An anti-trust suit filed by the Justice Department in the mid-1970s succeeded in breaking AT&T into a long-distance company and seven regional "Baby Bells" in 1984.) By the early 1980s, MCI no longer feared it would go out of business. It expanded its networks, developed its brand image and recruited its first residential customers. But it was still a bit player.

One man and one financial instrument would catapult MCI into the big league. In the early 1980s MCI was introduced to Michael Milken, of Drexel Burnham Lambert, the investment firm that was to become the most profitable player on Wall Street through the judicious use of junk bonds, high-yield corporate bonds that could turn a corporate mouse into a



Jerry Taylor is looking forward to trying to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Telecommunications Act, which Congress passed last year

tiger. Milken used them to transform American industry and he did the same for MCI. He raised \$2.7 billion for the company in the mid-1980s, giving it the financial might to challenge AT&T's dominance in international telecoms. "We certainly would not have got that kind of capital without him," Taylor said.

Milken's party ended in 1990 when he pleaded guilty to violating securities laws to settle the Justice Department's racketeering case. Milken went to prison, but the fallen hero was not forgotten by Taylor and Bert Roberts, MCI's chairman. Taylor says he has been an adviser to MCI from time to time.

MCI continued to grow in the early 1990s, becoming a well-known consumer name through relentless advertising. The company made a \$1 billion investment in The News Corporation in 1995. News Corp is the parent company of *The Times*. Concert will inherit this investment when the BT-MCI merger receives regulatory approval, expected in the autumn.

Since then a fresh round of regulatory changes has presented it with another opportunity — one so big it could make or break MCI's fortunes. In early 1996, Congress passed the Telecommunications Act, the most radical and sweeping piece

of telecoms legislation since the dismantling of AT&T.

The Act is designed to eliminate the industry's remaining trade barriers, allowing the long-distance carriers, the regional and local phone companies and the cable companies to compete in each other's markets. Before its passage, MCI, AT&T and Sprint, the three main long-distance operators, could not provide local phone calls.

The Act was supposed to trigger a free-for-all. The reality is that developing new networks, prising open the local monopolies that still exist, negotiating intercon-

nection fees with those companies and taking the stubborn ones to court will take years and billions of dollars. MCI, in effect, faces a repeat of the war that it fought in the Sixties and Seventies. And this time, it could not do it alone.

Enter BT. Taylor said BT would not actually finance MCI's push into local markets. But having BT as its owner will remove the pressure on MCI to report ever-increasing earnings. It can, in other words, invest as little or as much as it wants without the irritation of public shareholders breathing down its neck.

Taylor could easily call it a day and devote his time to marlin fishing and scuba diving, his two favourite activities. As tempting as it is, he is not ready. He has agreed a three-year contract with

Concert and said he was looking forward to transforming it, through MCI, into a serious player in the local market. "I don't see this as the end of my career," he said. "I see it as a huge opportunity to carry on, building up an international partnership with BT and getting into local markets in America. This is exciting. Who would not want to be part of it? I love action."

The City is looking forward to Concert's launch and thinks it has a good chance of achieving its goals if BT and MCI can merge their operations and cultures without too many snags. Tysoe, of Strauss Turnbull, said: "There's such a large market to go after worldwide. These guys deserve to get their butts kicked if they spend their time squabbling with each other instead."

## HIDDEN ASSETS

## Opulent reminder of when banks projected their might

Cashing a cheque on the way to the Ritz Hotel can be an exotic experience. A clutch of bank buildings in Piccadilly built by the architect of the Dorchester, William Curtis Green (1875-1960), offers the passer-by a chance to step into a world set utterly apart from ordinary high street bank branches. On the corner of Arlington Street and Piccadilly, at No 160, is a branch of Barclays Bank designed by Curtis Green that is a luxurious oriental world of whimsy. Four Venetian red lacquered columns glow with reflected light against black lacquered counters picked out in gold. The surface of the central desk is red and covered with oriental scenes, and high on a side wall hangs a red and gold chinoiserie panel.

Opposite Barclays, at No 63 Piccadilly on the corner of Albemarle Street, is Curtis Green's branch of the National Westminster, built in the late 1920s and refurbished last year. This is an unusually tall street facade, but Curtis Green has managed to articulate it successfully with the help of borrowed models from the Italian Renaissance. The ground floor level is arched in the style of an Italian palazzo and the stonework of the door frames and the cornice is decorated with elaborate rose devices. Curtis Green inserted a tall mezzanine level, and for the top three floors above the building's cornice incorporated a loggia worked with an elaborate bound iron balcony.

The building is thoroughly



The high ceiling completes the thoroughly classical interior

classical — its doors and railings with Italianate handles and decorations emphasise the strength and security that a bank ought to possess — and would not have disgraced the Medici family. Bearing a passing resemblance to the opulent city banks of East Coast North America of the 1920s (done in the "Big Bow Wow" style of Corinth USA), the new National Westminster, when it opened in 1928, with its large

grandiose interiors just visible from the street, immediately pulled in customers. Today the branch retains much of its splendid green and white chequerboard marble floor, a series of fine pendant lights and an elaborate Greek key pattern circling the high ceiling, and a striking modern tapestry by Tom Phillips. Magnificently spacious, this has never been an average bank branch.

The 1920s was a period when all the leading banks were involved in a mad rush to provide more branches and attract more customers. Competition was intense, particularly on this stretch of Piccadilly. Curtis Green had only recently converted the glamorous Wolseley Motor Car showroom at 160 Piccadilly into his celebrated Barclays Bank branch. And Sir Edwin Lutyens had designed an exquisite little branch for the Midland Bank on the corner of St James's, with two rooms set aside for ladies and American visitors, and fitted out in a sober country-house Georgian style with reproduction walnut furniture.

The prevailing wisdom of the day was that bank buildings should reflect the monumental wealth and security of their occupiers. Architects were asked to build in an appropriately noble style.

Curtis Green built two banks in Piccadilly in the 1920s and Stratton House a little further along the street. The climax of his career was the commission to build the Dorchester in 1930. But more Londoners will remember him for his bank branches. As Professor C.H. Reilly wrote in the *Architectural Review* in 1927, his bank interiors were delightful. "There is none of the sense of depression which our bank interiors are generally so careful to provide. To be told one was overdrawn in Mr Curtis Green's bank would merely produce a laugh, and how much better."

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

# Upbeat view on windfall tax helps BG to shine

BG was the best performing company among the top 100, climbing 6.5p to 173.5p, as a clutch of brokers rushed to recommend the shares to their clients.

SBC Warburg has joined the growing number of brokers to suggest that the imposition of a windfall tax on the utilities by an incoming Labour government has already been factored into the market. Top of its shopping list is BG, half of the British Gas demerger earlier this year.

On Thursday, Credit Lyonnais Laid tipped BG as one to "buy" and new Warburg is pushing the stock to clients. UBS is also said to be telling clients that BG is worth 200p a share and more if the Monopolies & Mergers Commission comes out in favour of the company in its dispute with Ofgas, the industry regulator.

Pannure PowerGen, the broker, prefers PowerGen, up 7.5p to 616p, among the utilities. Other utilities went better as the market began to take a more upbeat view of the windfall tax situation.

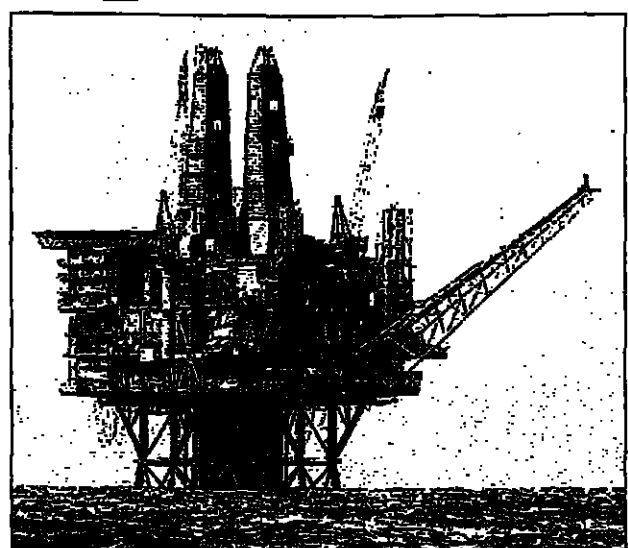
Among the electricity companies British Energy rose 6p to 134p, National Power 9p to 50.5p, Scottish Hydro 5.5p to 370p and Southern Electric 7.5p to 396p. The water sector saw Severn Trent firm 9.5p to 70.5p, Thames Water 10p to 67.5p, United Utilities 11p to 63.5p, Yorkshire Water 19p to 35p, and Wessex Water 9p to 380.5p.

Share prices generally ended the week on a steady note but below their best of the day. After weathering a subdued set of US payroll numbers for March, London was dragged lower by another volatile start to trading in New York. It saw the Dow Jones industrial average down more than 70 points during the first hour of trading before rallying strongly.

The FT-SE 100 index touched 4,247.6 before reducing its lead to 22.0 at 4,236.6. That's a fall on the week of 76.3. A total of 772 million shares changed hands with brokers reporting some genuine retail demand from both institutional and private clients.

The continuing slide in the price of crude oil on world markets provided another bumpy ride for the oil companies. Among the leaders BP fell 13p to 670.5p, while Shell shed 8p to 10.33p.

News of some disappointing drilling results in the Gulf of



The continuing slide in the price of crude hit the oil sector

Mexico brought the recent strong run by British Boreo to a grinding halt with the shares finishing 148.5p down at 13.91p. A statement from the company said the oil found was too heavy to extract commercially.

Elsewhere in the sector, Enterprise Oil rose 3.5p to 620p, Pittfield 1.5p to 45p, and Seaford Resources 4p to 380.5p.

Keep an eye on Cortec International during the next couple of weeks. The company is to give an update on trials of its treatment for osteoporosis, or brittle bones. Positive news could provide a further boost to the shares, which have come up from the 165p level this year. They closed yesterday at 250p, down 6p to 244p.

ended the day 5p better at 274p. SBC Warburg has made a sum-of-the-parts valuation of the business and has set a target price of 310p a share.

Further reflection on this week's profits news from Senior Engineering lifted the price 6.5p to 131p. Beeson Gregory, the broker, is sticking with a pre-tax profit forecast of £35.1 million compared with £29.5 million last time for the year to January 31. But it says the group has the potential to beat its forecast.

Rank Organisation continued to make headway with a rise of 11p to 447p as brokers reflected on this week's sale of its film distribution business to Carlton Communications, 1p easier at 51p. Now hopes are growing that Rank has found a buyer for its 49 per cent stake in Rank Xerox. Brokers say Rank Xerox could command a price tag of almost £1 billion. The proceeds from such a sale may well be used to finance a share buyback operation.

There seems to be no stopping little Drew Scientific where the price touched 240p before closing 32.5p higher at 195p despite the best efforts of the company and its broker to play down recent speculation. It relates to the group's attempt at developing a new marker for the onset of cardiovascular disease. The share price has more than trebled in the past few weeks after a placing at 52p.

Bickerton Group made a cautious debut on Aim after a placing by Teather & Greenwood, the broker, at 40p. Shares in the builder and property developer opened at 44.5p before ending the day at 42p, a premium of 2p.

Also on Aim, Torch Holdings was unmoved at 107p in first time trading, while on the main board Oxford Technology, the venture capitalist, was steady at 95p on its market debut.

GILT-EDGED: Bond prices took the latest US payroll numbers in their stride to end the session near their best levels of the day. They also outperformed German bonds supported by renewed gains for the pound against the mark. Brokers said the volatility that had been expected to accompany the payroll numbers failed to materialise.

In the futures pit, the June series of the long gilt ended £4 better at £108.73 in modest trading that saw just 47,000 contracts completed.

In the cash market, longer dated issues saw Treasury 8 per cent 2015 firm £3.2 to £101.15, while at the shorter end Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was three ticks firmer at £102.4.

NEW YORK: Sell-offs in the bond market and in IBM shares kept the Dow Jones industrial average trading lower at midday, down 35.12 at 6,442.23.

Closing Prices Page 39

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Pannure PowerGen, the broker, prefers PowerGen, up 7.5p to 616p, among the utilities. Other utilities went better as the market began to take a more upbeat view of the windfall tax situation.

Among the electricity companies British Energy rose 6p to 134p, National Power 9p to 50.5p, Scottish Hydro 5.5p to 370p and Southern Electric 7.5p to 396p. The water sector saw Severn Trent firm 9.5p to 70.5p, Thames Water 10p to 67.5p, United Utilities 11p to 63.5p, Yorkshire Water 19p to 35p, and Wessex Water 9p to 380.5p.

Share prices generally ended the week on a steady note but below their best of the day. After weathering a subdued set of US payroll numbers for March, London was dragged lower by another volatile start to trading in New York. It saw the Dow Jones industrial average down more than 70 points during the first hour of trading before rallying strongly.

The FT-SE 100 index touched 4,247.6 before reducing its lead to 22.0 at 4,236.6. That's a fall on the week of 76.3. A total of 772 million shares changed hands with brokers reporting some genuine retail demand from both institutional and private clients.

The continuing slide in the price of crude oil on world markets provided another bumpy ride for the oil companies. Among the leaders BP fell 13p to 670.5p, while Shell shed 8p to 10.33p.

News of some disappointing drilling results in the Gulf of

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## MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):  
Dow Jones 6442.23 (+35.12)  
S&P Composite 748.31 (+2.01)

Tokyo:  
Nikkei Average 17860.59 (+268.72)

Hong Kong:  
Hang Seng 12204.59 (+149.42)

Amsterdam:  
AEX 1004.97 (+16.32)

Sydney:  
ASX 2269.5 (+4.5)

Frankfurt:  
DAX 3244.93 (+29.68)

Singapore:  
Straits 2075.78 (+2.30)

Brussels:  
General 11646.70 (+14.04)

Paris:  
CAC-40 2517.97 (+14.9)

Zurich:  
SIX 933.90 (+1.85)

London:  
FTSE 100 4236.6 (+22.0)

FTSE 250 5148.19 (+10.2)

FTSE 350 2024.4 (+4.4)

FTSE 1000 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-100 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-200 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-300 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-400 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-500 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-600 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-700 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-800 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-900 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1000 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1100 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1200 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1300 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1400 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1500 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1600 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1700 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1800 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-1900 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-2000 2104.19 (+4.75)

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FTSE 1000-2700 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-2800 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-2900 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-3000 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-3100 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-3200 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-3300 2104.19 (+4.75)

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FTSE 1000-3700 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-3800 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-3900 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-4000 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-4100 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-4200 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-4300 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-4400 2104.19 (+4.75)

FTSE 1000-4500 2104.19 (+4.75)





## UNDER WAY 31

Self-assessed tax marathon up and running

## WEEKEND MONEY

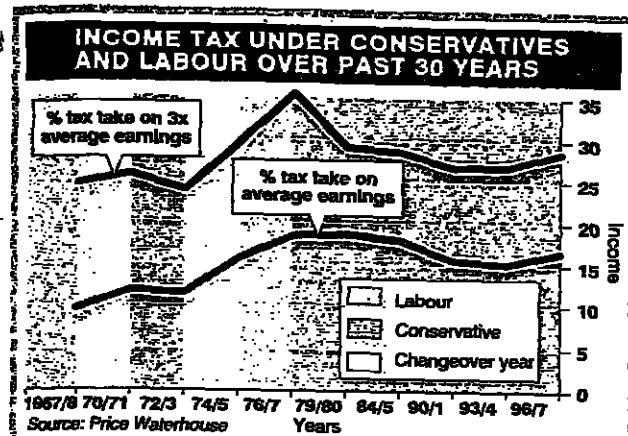
## ROLLERCOASTER 33

Investors should prepare for a bumpy ride



THE TIMES: PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

## Manifestos launched with a query



Marianne Curphey and Nathan Yates on the real story of taxation in the past 30 years



Taxation, the role of the family and greater personal financial independence have emerged as key themes of an election campaign that started in earnest this week with the launch of the main parties' manifestos.

Both Labour and the Tories are keen to present themselves as supporters of low taxation and encouragers of enterprise and self-reliance. But a survey carried out exclusively for *The Times* by Price Waterhouse, the accountants, shows that on past performance both main parties have presided over rises in direct taxation during the past 30 years. Focusing on headline rates of direct tax can, and has, distracted voters from significant changes in allowances, tax bands and indirect taxes, according to Price Waterhouse. All such details are conspicuously absent in the manifestos.

Promises of lower headline rates from the two main parties appear prominently. Labour's challenge is to bury once and for all its "tax and spend" image and to reassure voters that it can deliver economic stability. Having promised to peg the standard and upper rates of income tax as an election pledge, Labour

has given notice in its election manifesto that it would be looking elsewhere for the money to fund its spending plans, namely a windfall levy on the privatised utilities. The party also announced a long-term objective of a 10p starting rate for income tax.

The Tories, as part of their attempt to appeal to voters on their record, remind them that the basic rate of tax has fallen from 33p to 23p during the Tories' 18-year reign. The Conservatives' aim is to get the basic rate down to 20p.

The Government also managed to spring a surprise with the pledge of a £1.2 billion tax break for 1.8 million married couples with children or dependent relatives. The tax break will be worth on average £700 per family and will allow married couples where one spouse does not work or earns less than his or her personal allowance to transfer some or part of his or her tax-free allowance to the working spouse.

But while the two main parties have pledged not to raise headline rates they have been more vague about indirect taxes. Changes to mortgage interest relief, personal allowances and windfall taxes can make a

significant difference to the disposable income of savers and borrowers.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, has refused to match Labour's commitment to rule out the extension of VAT to food, children's clothes, books, newspapers or transport. Labour, however, has been vague about the new "individual savings account" it plans to introduce. It says only that it will "review the corporate and capital gains tax regimes to see how the tax system can promote greater long-term investment". But it has pledged to reduce VAT on fuel to 5 per cent.

The Liberal Democrats have taken a different tack on direct tax rates. Paddy Ashdown, the party leader, has taken the controversial step of promising to put a penny on income tax to pay for improved education.

But if, as the Tories insist, political parties should be judged on their record, there could be a salutary lesson to be learnt from the tax policies of the past. Price Waterhouse's survey for *The Times* tells the real story of income tax under Labour and Conservative Governments of the past 30 years. Taking into account factors such as personal allow-

ances, the survey shows how two families of four on different income levels would have fared. A family on average earnings under Harold Wilson's Government in 1967 lost 9.9 per cent of the breadwinner's salary in income tax. The same family today loses 16.3 per cent—an overall rise of 6.4 per cent.

For a family on three times' average earnings there has also been an increase over the period. In 1967 this family lost 24.7 per cent of its income in direct tax, whereas today the figure is 28.1 per cent—an overall 3.4 per cent extra to the Inland Revenue. Although the

Conservative Party faithful can point out that the basic headline rate of income tax has been cut from 33 per cent to 23 per cent, a look behind the headlines tells quite a different story.

John Major may claim that this is the party of tax cuts, but Price Waterhouse's analysis of income tax since the last change of administration in 1979 demonstrates that the real reduction for a family with average earnings has been just 2 per cent.

The fall has been from an 18.3 per cent tax under James Callaghan to 16.3 per cent today. The higher-earning family has received a more substantial cut from 34.8 per

cent to 28.1 per cent, though this needs to be balanced against increases in indirect taxes.

But, for those on their way to the ballot box, the story of Labour's effect on income tax could cause greater jitters. When Harold Wilson's Labour Party swept to power in 1964 after 13 years of Tory rule, one of the first actions of his Chancellor, James Callaghan, was to raise the standard rate of income tax by 6d (2.5p). And in 1974 another Labour election victory was followed by a 3p rise in all income tax rates.

Our survey shows that between 1974 and 1977 Labour consistently raised direct tax levels. The burden on a family

earning three times the average was pushed from 24 per cent to its highest ever at 34.8 per cent. More surprisingly, the family on average earnings also lost out under Chancellor Denis Healey. By 1979 he had raised their income tax outlay to 18.5 per cent, another all-time high.

The spectre of the Healey years, with their high income tax, high inflation and the humiliation of IMF intervention, may well haunt Tony Blair as the country gears up for polling day. But according

to John Whiting, head of personal tax at Price Waterhouse, using your vote to prevent tax rises is likely to be difficult.

"Our survey shows that income tax has risen over the past 30 years, particularly for those on average earnings, and general taxation has risen even further," he said. "Whichever party wins the election, it will struggle to restrict this trend, and the most voters can hope for is some degree of choice in how the extra taxes will be levied."

WEEKEND MONEY is edited by Anne Ashworth

## HOW THE PARTY PROMISES COMPARE

## THE CONSERVATIVES

■ **Tax and saving.** Aim to cut basic rate of tax to 20p over the next Parliament and maintain maximum tax rate of 40p. Ability to transfer personal allowances between married couples looking after dependent children. Inheritance tax threshold to be raised "when prudent to do so". Development of existing tax breaks on Peps and Tessas. Expansion of employee share ownership, including a new Share Match Scheme giving employees free shares if they take a stake in their company.

■ **Pensions and long-term care.** Radical revamp of the state pension system, transferring the next generation of contributions into private plans. Contributions to be

made out of taxed income, but pensions to be received tax free. Easier setting up of group personal pensions for small businesses. More flexibility for people to continue to contribute to personal pensions after moving to jobs with company schemes. Long-term care costs to be funded by private insurance in return for more family retention of assets.

## LABOUR

■ **Tax and saving.** No increase in basic or top tax rates. Long-term objective to cut the starting rate of tax to 10p. VAT on fuel cut to 5 per cent. Further linking of the tax and benefit systems. New individual savings account and extension of Peps and Tessas.

Review of capital gains tax system. Further encouragement of employee share ownership plans.

■ **Pensions and long-term care.** Basic state pension to be retained and increased in line with prices. Second-tier stakeholder pensions invested in private pension plans for non-members of company schemes. A new "citizenship" pension for carers. Tighter regulation of personal pensions with reform of the Financial Services Act. Implementation of pension splitting on divorce. Establishment of a royal commission on long-term care funding.

## LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

■ **Tax and saving.** An income tax rate of 50 per cent for those

who earn more than £100,000, and an extra 1p on the basic rate of tax, bringing it to 24p. An increase in the personal tax allowance by £200. The party has no plans to change inheritance tax or capital gains tax rates. It intends to maintain tax exempt special savings accounts and personal equity plans, and plans the introduction of a save-as-you-earn scheme.

■ **Pensions and long-term care.** Encouragement of personal pensions, portable pensions and long-term care provisions. Reinforcement of consumer and investor protection, alongside independent regulation.

SARA MCCONNELL, CAROLINE MERRELL

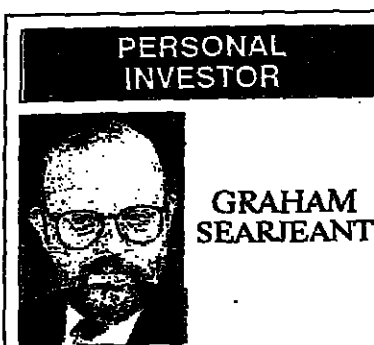
## Dividends are in danger

Millions of small investors who are retired or have been cast on to the economic scrapheap depend on dividends to pay their bills. Fortunately, this half-yearly income has, on average, risen faster than prices, faster even than company earnings of late. That has cushioned many a household budget against the collapse of interest rates, which hit those who depend on savings. Few others cared much; lower interest rates being assumed by the borrowing classes to be an unalloyed social good. Uncaring forces are now gathering to attack dividends.

One advance party is the board of LucasVarity, the recently merged mid-Atlantic engineering group. It has quietly been canvassing City investors on the idea of abolishing UK-style dividends for a US-style programme of share buybacks. Peculiar circumstances make this more tax efficient for LucasVarity than for most companies. Even so, its shares have been weak of late.

Investors willingly forego income from a company that is in the development stage or growing so fast that it needs all the cash it can muster to invest. More mature companies, including LucasVarity, should deliver a regular return on money invested in them.

Share buybacks are not suitable for regular distributions. If all shareholders are included, as in the one-off arrangement at Iceland Group, it is too expensive. If a company just buys from institutions in the market, it is even more inequitable than buybacks by companies that do pay normal dividends. But it is convenient for manage-



PERSONAL INVESTOR

GRAHAM SEARJEANT

This reasoning has always appealed to Labour. It led to a costly mistake in 1965, when taxes designed to discourage dividends instead slashed ploughed-back profits.

The temptation will be great to raise vast sums by axing dividend tax relief for pension funds, blaming it for a "bias" in favour of dividends. This could also backfire. In any case, dividends are likely to become politically incorrect. What a pity. Dividends are higher and capital investment lower in Britain than in most countries, but annual dividends do not crowd out investment. The spate of share buybacks and one-off special dividends shows that finance directors are anxious to borrow more.

Investment is low because excessively high returns are demanded, because so many groups have cut back operations and retreated from peripheral businesses. After many bad experiences, companies with strong cashflow are now discouraged from diversifying. They should pay out heavily so that investors can recycle profits into new ventures.

That process is still not working well enough. But any attack on dividends would make things worse. Without a solid anchor of rising dividends, the market focus on stability and guaranteed growth in earnings per share would be even more intense and relentless. That would stop even more boards from taking long-term risks on expansion and propel even more to take the safer route of buying up a few more competitors. Dividends are healthy for all.

## SATURDAY NIGHT PEP FEVER.

PEP DEADLINE: MIDNIGHT APRIL 5TH.

You mean to say you haven't bought a PEP this tax year? Sure, time's about to run out. But don't panic. You've still time to become a Fidelity investor. Apply today and you can take full advantage of one of our top performing, low cost PEPs. Phone us up now on 0800 41 41 71. Then we can fax your PEP application to you straight away.

Alternatively, you can ask for your nearest Fidelity office and call in personally with your PEP application.

Trust Fidelity to have the solution for every contingency. Like a phasing option to let you drip-feed your money

★ Phone for your tax app. ★ Fax it back to us.

0800 41 41 71 01737 836 980

Call free 9am to 12 midnight. <http://www.fid-int.com/uk>

into your PEP over the next six months. So you can feel a little more at ease, regardless of stockmarket uncertainty or a looming election.

We even have a No-Cost Windfall PEP\* if you're about to receive free conversion shares from your building society or insurance company.

So call us now to beat the PEP deadline. But remember, we stop accepting faxes at midnight on 01737 836980. So you've only got until 12pm. And that's the fax!



Fidelity Investments

PEP HOTLINE GUARANTEED OPEN UNTIL 12 MIDNIGHT

\*The annual fee on the Fidelity Windfall PEP due on 5/4/98 will be waived for investors who have invested their full £6,000 General PEP allowance with Fidelity as at 5/4/98. Resources and assets are as at 31/1/97 and include resources of F&B Corp, a US company and affiliate. Past performance is no guarantee of future returns. The value of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up and an investor may not get back the amount invested. Tax assumptions may be subject to future statutory change and the value of tax savings and eligibility to invest in a PEP will depend on individual circumstances. Fidelity only provides information about its products and does not give investment advice based on individual circumstances. Issued by Fidelity Investments Ltd, the Fidelity PEP manager, regulated by IMRO and the Personal Investment Authority.



Gavin Lumsden examines how new legislation will affect you and your workplace

# Pension police switch to Opra beat

On November 5, 1991, the body of Robert Maxwell was found floating in the sea. His death sparked off an investigation that led to the discovery of Britain's biggest pension scandal. More than 14,000 pensioners saw their income dry up as a £400 million black hole was uncovered in company pension schemes in his empire. It took more than three years for the City firms implicated in the scandal finally to cough up £276 million to guarantee these pensions.

Pensioners such as Anthony Pearman, a former pilot with Maxwell-owned British International Helicopters, and his wife, Gill, had to subsist on a state pension for years and never recovered their full entitlement.

Tomorrow sees the overdue reaction to this debacle. Under the Pensions Act 1995 the UK's 200,000 occupational pension schemes come under statutory control for the first time. These schemes hold £600 billion of assets — equivalent to 75 per cent of the UK's GDP.

Ironically, the new rules follow recent government proposals for the wholesale reform of pension provision that could ring the death knell for occupational schemes. Stretching to 1,000 pages of dense legalese, the Act's objective of restoring public confidence in

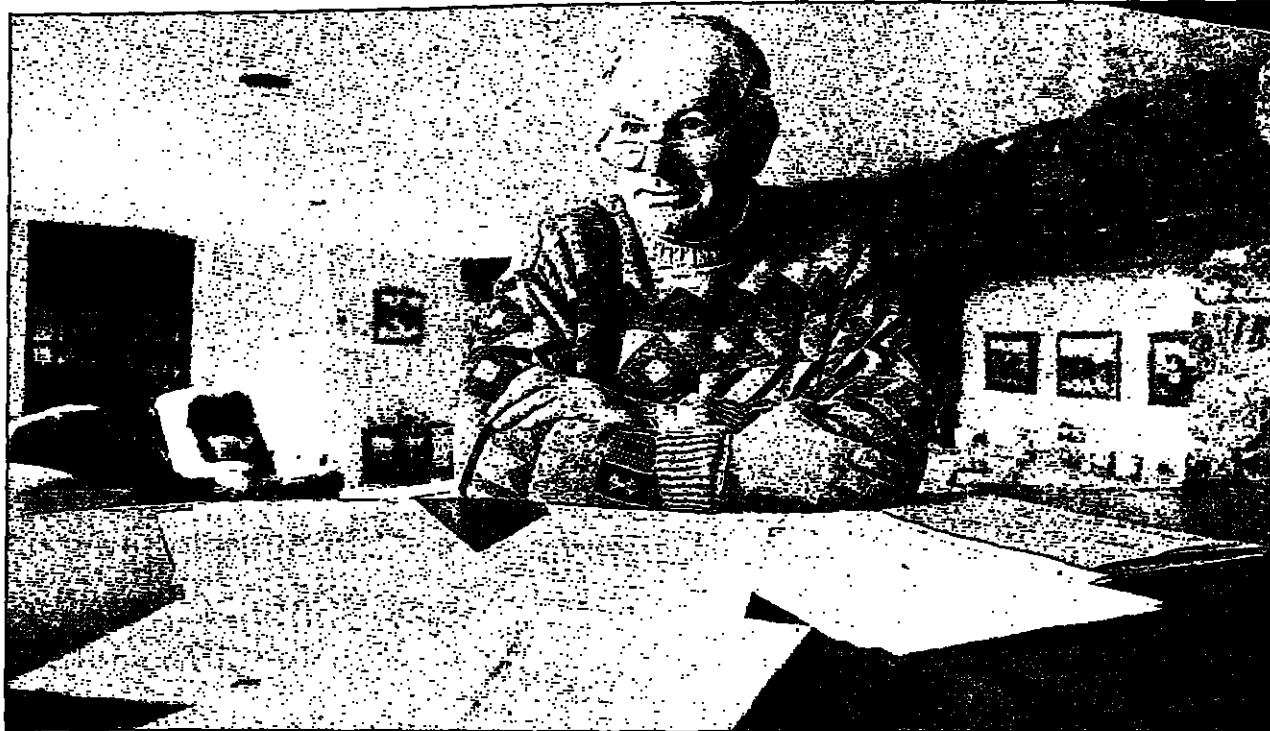
company pension schemes is nevertheless laudable.

Yet sceptics argue that it is fundamentally flawed. Doug Johnstone, managing director of Johnstone Douglas, the employee benefit consultancy, said: "The bank that can't be robbed hasn't been invented. A skilled and determined robber will always be able to get past any laws you set."

Caroline Johnston, chief executive of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (Opra), the new watchdog, said: "We have a police force, but there is still crime. What the Act does is introduce more checks and balances to ensure the average scheme is run more effectively. What is also important is that in Opra it provides a place for people to report to if they think there is something wrong with their scheme."

Opra will have the power to conduct searches, start criminal prosecutions and levy fines on firms and individuals that breach its rules.

In particular it will punish firms that take contributions from employees' salaries and fail to put the money in the pension fund within 19 days. To delay will be to have committed a crime. One of the worst features of the Robert Maxwell affair was the ease with which he diverted pension funds to support his ailing empire. In addition the



Anthony Pearman, a former pilot who has a reduced pension, suffered because of the Robert Maxwell scandal

Act obliges pension scheme advisers to blow the whistle when they find anything wrong. Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the Robert Maxwell affair was the way he rode roughshod over the established rules of consulting pension fund advisers, such as

trustees. To prevent this the Act spells out that the duty of trustees is to the scheme and not to the employer.

Under Opra rules trustees are responsible for appointing advisers. They must also set out a statement of investment principles outlining the risk at

which members' money will be put. Another crucial aim of the new Act is to increase employees' knowledge of their schemes. Under Opra, employers must give new members details of the scheme within two months of joining. The Act also gives members

the right to appoint at least a third of their trustees from the workforce. Although many companies have gained their members' approval to opt out of this system, thousands of member-nominated trustees will this weekend be wrestling with their new responsibilities.

Hugh Arthur, head of pensions at Biddle & Co, the legal firm, said: "Most company schemes already have strong member representation. The Act covers firms where there is none."

If members feel they have a grievance they must first go through the scheme's complaints procedure before contacting the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service. This is funded by Opra but manned by volunteers. If you are still not satisfied, your last resort is Julian Farrand, the Pensions Ombudsman.

Unfortunately, although the Act has strong anti-fraud measures, it will be less effective if companies go bankrupt and pension schemes are forced to wind up. The Act lays down a minimum funding requirement (MFR) that insists all occupational pension schemes work towards establishing permanent reserves that could pay off its liabilities immediately if needed. However, John Shuttleworth, of Coopers & Lybrand, believes the Government has set a dangerously low MFR, partly because so few companies do actually go belly-up.

For a free guide to the Act call the Opra helpdesk on 01273 627600. The National Association of Pension Funds has a series of 14 booklets at £10 each. Call 0171-259 9767.

## Pensions reclaim Clarke's 1p tax present

Governments give with one hand and take with the other. From tomorrow the basic rate of tax falls 1p to 23p, as the Chancellor promised in last November's Budget. While this is good news for your wallet it will cut the amount of tax relief you get on pension contributions. Not only could this wipe out any benefit from the tax cut, it could leave you worse off in retirement if less money goes into your pension fund.

Governments offer basic tax relief on pension contributions to encourage people to put money aside for retirement. In the current financial year, which is about to end, the basic tax was 24p, as was relief on payments into pension plans.

This meant if you wanted to pay a net monthly premium of £100 into your pension you had to pay only £76 and the Government made up the difference. From next week you will have to pay £1 more to keep your pension on track. This may not sound much but has a cumulative effect, particularly as this is the second cut in two years — in 1995 pensions tax relief was 25p.

If you are a member of an occupational scheme, check your payslip for any change in the amount going into your pension. If you are an employee with a personal pension you probably pay into the plan by direct debit. Under the banks' clearing system rules, pension companies should contact you before raising your payment. If you pay by standing order, contact the company if you have not heard from it.

If self-employed, you will pay gross into your personal pension and reclaim the tax from the Revenue. From next week you will get back £1 less for every £100 contributed. It will still be possible to exploit this year's rate of relief in future. If your salary rises or you inherit a lump sum you can "carry back" contributions to previous tax years so long as you do not exceed the maximum (if you are under 35 it is 17.5 per cent of your wage). The amount you carry back will get the appropriate tax relief for that year: 24p for 1996-97, 25p for 1995-96.

GAVIN LUMSDEN

## The key to unlocking cash set aside for retirement

Sara McConnell looks into a scheme for changing pensions to lump sums

People aged 50 and over with pension benefits frozen in schemes of former employers are being encouraged to transfer the funds to personal pensions and draw them immediately to unlock cash sums. But experts warn those tempted to cash in their pension early that they risk an impoverished retirement. Those who are, however, desperate enough for cash to contemplate such a step will almost certainly be able to get at their money without buying an expensive personal pension.

Inducements to transfer money from employers' pension funds are bound to rekindle fears of potential mis-selling of personal pensions. Hundreds of thousands of people who were wrongly advised to transfer from company schemes into personal pensions in the late 1980s are still waiting for compensation from insurance companies to make up benefits that they have lost from their employers. But in spite of the long-running mis-selling scandal, regulators have not outlawed transfers to personal

pensions, relying on tighter monitoring of salesmen.

Regal Partners Financial Planning, a financial adviser, has placed advertisements in the national press saying: "Release your pension! Is your pension locked? Are you aged 50 or over and not receiving your pension? You could receive a cash sum now! We hold the key!" The "key", according to Regal, is that holders of personal pensions are allowed to take their pensions any time after 50, while most employers' schemes have a retirement age of 60 or 65. Moving funds into a personal pension and taking the pension immediately gives access to a tax-free lump sum of a quarter of the fund.

The remainder stays invested, with income from it "drawn down" to provide extra cash. Paul Smith of Regal

said most of the takers for the scheme would be people who need quick cash. "It's for people who are about to have their homes repossessed or who need money for a new business venture."

Releasing a pension fund in this way is perfectly legal. But it could all too easily leave you impoverished, according to Billy Burrows, of Annuity Direct, the independent adviser and annuity expert. He said: "Pensions should be used to provide a pension and people have to understand that if they take the money now, they can't take it again."

Taking a frozen pension early also drastically reduces its value, said Geoffrey Wilson, partner of Excalibur Actuaries. He has calculated that a 50-year-old with a frozen pension of £5,000 in a year in a scheme with a retirement age of 65 could lose up to four fifths of

its value if he or she took the pension at 50. Poor annuity rates for younger people, and loss of investment growth and index linking reduce the value of the pension. Some employers will reduce the frozen pension before they transfer it.

But Mr Wilson's calculation does not take account of the often high costs of transferring the funds into a personal pension. He says it is unnecessary and probably more expensive for people wanting to cash in their pensions to use the "key" of a personal pension. "You just need to ask the scheme trustees if you can take your pension early. Company pension schemes typically offer retirement pensions reduced by 4-6 per cent a year for each year early."

Anyone who does transfer into a personal pension and is offered the option of "income drawdown" rather than buying an annuity should have a pension fund of at least £100,000 to reduce the risk of the capital out of which income is drawn becoming dangerously eroded, Mr Wilson said.

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How the advertisement appeared in the national press

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PRUDENTIAL

Nathan Yates finds plastic paybacks increasingly attractive

## Issuers scramble for credit card customers



Les McKeown has had the air tickets to prove that a quarter of a million loyalty points were more than just a gimmick

In an increasingly cut-throat card market, loyalty is at a premium, and issuers are increasingly ready to pay bonuses in the scramble to keep customers. Bank of England figures released this week show that high credit card use pushed net consumer borrowing to a record £122 billion in February. The month saw a 17.5 per cent rise in net consumer credit, the fastest since May 1989.

One beneficiary of the war among credit card companies for this spending bonanza is Les McKeown, a Belfast art gallery owner. He said: "I thought loyalty points were just a gimmick, so I never kept track of my American Express Rewards. But then I needed to send a team out to set up our new gallery in San Francisco. I had over a quarter of a million Rewards points by then, and I was delighted to find out that was enough to pay for their trip."

A report by Professor Steve Worthington of Stafford University shows in terms of total financial gain the best scheme is provided by Bradford & Bingley Building Society. On its Visa/Mastercard you receive a 4 per cent return on all your spending. For £10,000 spent, this adds up to a £400 payback.

With Bradford & Bingley's card the money must go towards paying off your mortgage, and you are only eligible for

this reward if Bradford & Bingley is your lender. For those who prefer to buy a car rather than a house, the GM card offers the next best rate of return. Here you receive 3 per cent of your spending, and after buying £10,000 worth of goods you would accumulate £300 towards a new Vauxhall car.

If you need neither a car nor a house, the most profitable option is American Express. Its Rewards system offers between 2 per cent and 2.7 per cent of money returned, to be spent in a variety of ways. Possible purchases range from flights to meals out, and one cardholder even paid for his entire honeymoon with Rewards points last month.

NatWest Bank's Visa/Mastercard offers between 0.6 and 2.5 per cent money back, which is the best loyalty scheme available from any high street bank. Its rewards are organised through Air Miles, one of the oldest loyalty systems.

Air Miles used to be spent on British Airways flights, but the range of rewards on offer has been expanded to keep pace with the competition. Air Miles can now bring you more diverse benefits, from days out with selected travel companies to hotel bookings. Perhaps their most unusual offer is a discount on white water rafting.

The Texaco Global Visa card reimburses its holders between 1 and 1.1 per

cent of their spending through vouchers that are valid at a variety of stores from Burton's clothes shops to Pizza Hut. After spending £10,000 on this card you will receive vouchers worth £110. The Goldfish card and the Alliance & Leicester Money Back card both offer a 1 per cent return on your expenditure, and a choice between these will depend on how you like your payment.

With the Goldfish card you will receive a discount on your British Gas bill or on shopping at Boots or Asda. With the Money Back card you will get your reward in straightforward cash, and Alliance & Leicester is the only company offering this direct benefit.

As well as the loyalty returns available on credit cards, there is also a range of non-payment schemes available from stores. UK citizens now carry 27 million supermarket loyalty cards in their wallets, an increase of more than 25 per cent in recent months.

One advantage of these cards is that they offer the opportunity to "double dip" into the rewards system. When buying your groceries, for example, you can use a Sainsbury Reward card to obtain a future food bill discount and at the same time you can make the purchase with American Express and add to your Rewards points tally.

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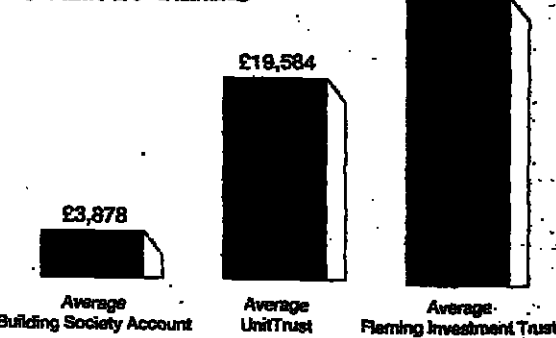
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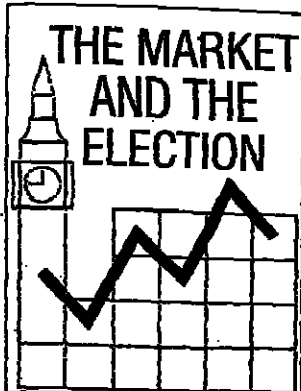
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The Good PEP



Matthew Wall finds few worries among businessmen ahead of the election

# A blip on the City's charts

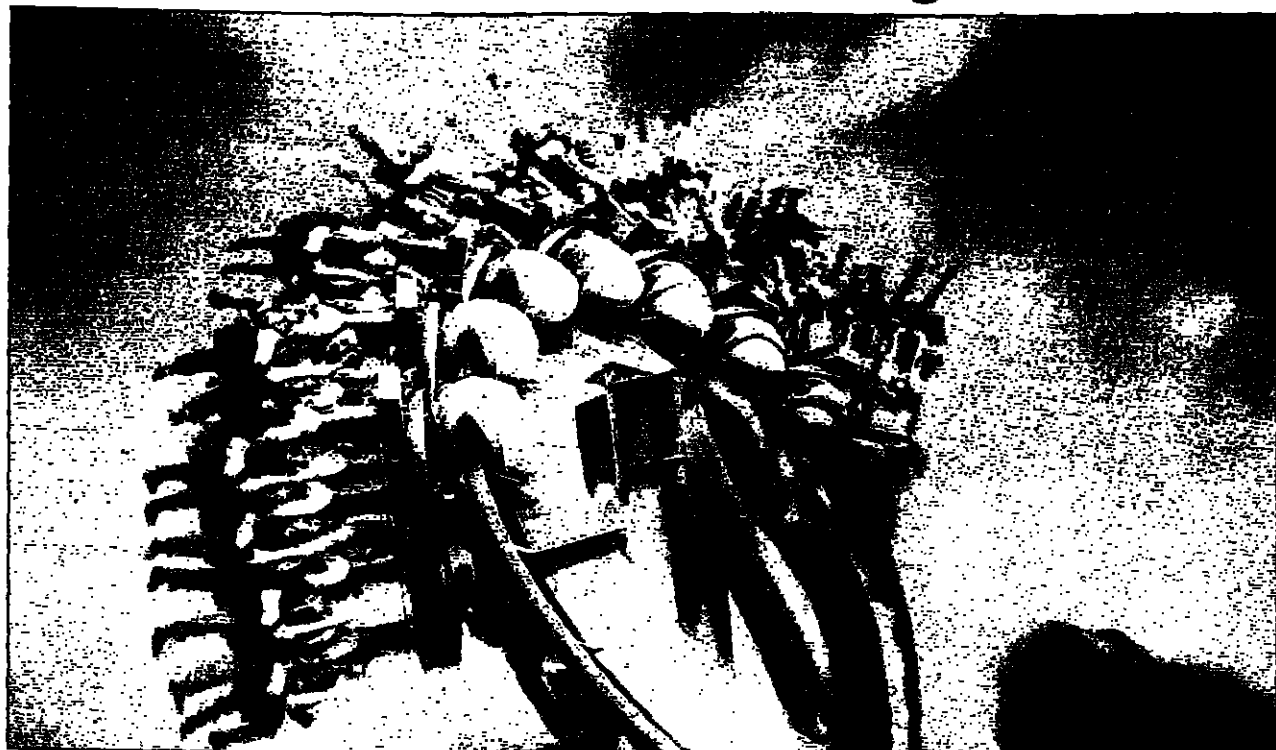


The message to investors this week, as skittishness on Wall Street took its toll on the UK stock market and the political parties unveiled their election manifestos to mixed reactions: "Please fasten your seatbelts as we will be encountering some turbulence".

The Dow Jones industrial average, the most commonly quoted US performance index, continued its slide amid fears that the Federal Reserve's quarter percentage point rise in the key US short-term interest rate last week would not be the last. Consequently the UK's FT-SE 100 index, which ended last week at 4,312.9, fell again and ended the week at around 4,237.

The Easter break exacerbated UK share price volatility as fund managers extended their holidays. Thin trading volume meant that fewer transactions had a greater effect on prices and this increased volatility added to the impression of nervousness and uncertainty in the run-up to the election.

But John Hatherley, head of research at M&G, the



Hold on tight: investors should prepare themselves for a bumpy ride on the markets in the run-up to the election

second largest unit trust provider with £16 billion under management, says there is actually a feeling of calm in the City.

"The market does not regard the Tory manifesto with anything more than academic interest. We've had a Labour lead of about 20 per cent since Black Wednesday in September 1992 and fund managers have been conditioned to a Labour victory for some time," he said.

"Indeed, the market began the year very strongly despite Labour's lead in the polls.

This election campaign is absolutely irrelevant to our asset allocations."

And one head of trading at a leading City-brokerage said: "The markets will remain fragile for the next couple of months and will become more and more volatile the closer we get to the election. But the long-term trend is upwards."

"Our view is that people shouldn't panic. Things are going to plan. The economic fundamentals look good in the medium term. As long as inflation is kept at a modest level and US interest rates do

not continue to rise, then things should be OK."

It seems that Labour's front bench Treasury team has successfully convinced the City that a change of government poses little threat to the market economy.

But concerns remain over Labour's lack of experience in office and the absence of specific policy detail. Despite such concerns, the last thing the City wants is the uncertainty of a small Labour majority or a hung Parliament. HSBC James

Capel, stockbrokers, is predicting a 140-seat majority for Labour and 4.25 per cent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) this year. Keith Skeoch, its chief economist, says: "Our GDP growth is at the upper end of expectations, but we believe the demutualisation of the building societies will give a further boost to the consumer-led recovery."

"We expect that a quarter of the £22 billion being raised will be spent by consumers. Given the net improvement in personal sector finances, cou-

pled with improvement in the housing market, the economy looks to be in good shape. As a result there is a distinct switch in the market from financial stocks to consumer stocks."

This view is supported by record consumer borrowing figures issued this week. Net consumer borrowing exceeded £12 billion in February, boosted by vigorous credit card borrowing.

And the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) reported improved retail sales volume growth for the year to March 1997, with a balance of 33 per cent of retailers enjoying growth compared with 27 per cent for the same period last year.

Such strong figures make interest rate rises even more likely after the election, as the new government battles to keep inflation at its 2.5 per cent target level. However, the CBI does not believe there is a danger of the economy slipping back into the boom-bust cycle, last seen in the late Eighties and early Nineties, as some fear.

A new Chancellor will be faced with the problem of raising interest rates just enough to convince the bond markets that inflation is under control, but not so much that the markets would fear a slowdown in economic recovery.

While the politicians battle it out over the coming weeks, they will undoubtedly forget that the UK market is a mere bit-part player in the global economy, blown here and there by the vicissitudes of other more influential markets.

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## Bull looks like finally running out of steam

At last it seems to be happening. After six years of its record-breaking bull run, the stock market has flown too close to the sun and is falling fast. What makes this different from previous setbacks, such as last summer, is that the mood of investors is changing and that could have some unpredictable effects. The Dow Jones industrial average in New York has plunged more than 8 per cent since its March peak of just over 7,000. Since the end of last week it has dropped more than 360 points, bringing it close to where it began the year. This is not yet on a par with the 1987 crash when the Dow collapsed 22.6 per cent, but it is close to the 10 per cent fall that would officially end the bull phase.

Wall Street analysts who until a few weeks ago were still bullish have abruptly turned gloomy. "The market is headed lower in the next few weeks," says Tom McManus,

equity strategist at NatWest Markets in New York.

Most professional investors seem to agree. The Federal Reserve Board put interest rates up 0.25 per cent a week ago and many experts expect two or three further rises as the authorities try to choke off incipient inflation in an economy that remains stubbornly strong. Higher interest rates are likely to mean weaker corporate profits, and the spate of first-quarter company results due over the next few weeks is expected to be disappointing, pushing share prices down further.

The big worry is what small investors will do. They have poured cash into the market in the past two years. Already, the average mutual fund (the US equivalent of unit trusts) is losing money this year. If the market falls further, losses could become large enough to prompt a wholesale flight from equities by individual investors. If that happens, the

market will be in trouble, so everyone is watching mutual fund cashflows like a hawk.

On the plus side there has been little sign of panic despite the wild price swings of the past week. More money is moving into cash, such as money market funds, but it has not yet become a flood. The best strategy for anyone watching the US is probably to wait but keep your finger on the button. If the market falls much beyond 10 per cent in the next few days, it may be wise to get out fast because the fall could become a panic.

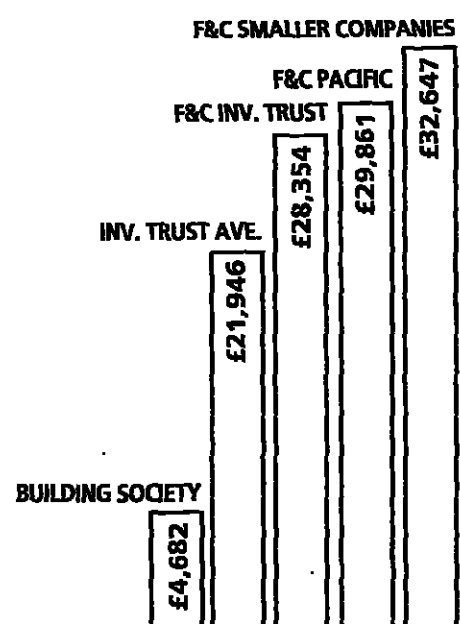
It is more likely that the market will stabilise and eventually start to move ahead again. The US economy is, after all, fundamentally strong. Corporate profits may fall, but companies are still generally healthy. There is, in short, no good reason for the market to crash or even decline much further than it has already.

RICHARD THOMPSON

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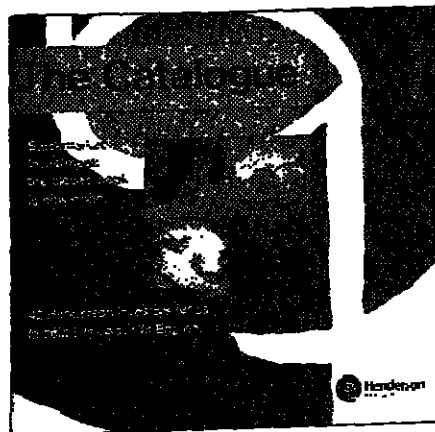
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## No home, but hit with £34,000 bill

The letter from Fairclough Homes two months ago came as a shock to Nick Chatten. The developer was demanding a payment of £34,000 to cover the remaining portion of the shared-equity mortgage Mr Chatten had taken out in 1990 to buy his one-bedroom flat on Fairclough's Clarendon Heights estate in Colchester, Essex. (Sara McConnell writes.)

But Mr Chatten had had his home repossessed two years before by the Halifax Building Society, which had lent him 50 per cent of the £66,000 cost of the property. The society sold the flat for £28,500. Mr Chatten has no property and no equity to allow him to raise money to pay Fairclough the balance of the property's value, which it can lawfully demand. Next week he will face the developer in court.

He says: "The letter was a total shock. I thought, well, the property isn't there any more so it's basically a paper debt [to

Fairclough]. But I'll go to court and tell the truth."

Mr Chatten claims that the shared equity contract was never fully explained to him. He said: "The whole thing was arranged to get us in as quickly as possible. I was very naive but I had already been gazumped once."

Fairclough declined to comment on individual cases. But it claims that "the last thing it wants to do is repossess anyone".

Mr Chatten believes he is the first to be taken to court by Fairclough for non-payment. But others may follow. Mr Chatten is just one of many at Clarendon Heights facing huge debts as Fairclough calls in payments for shared-equity mortgages. The developer offered the loans between 1989 and 1992 and growing numbers of residents can expect demands this year. But most have seen the value of their homes plummet and the equity, to allow them to borrow and pay off the debt, is minimal.



Nick Chatten says his contract was never fully explained

## Shared equity time bomb takes its toll

Growing numbers of borrowers who bought new homes at the end of the 1980s housing boom are facing demands for hundreds of thousands of pounds from developers who signed them up to "shared equity" mortgage deals. Some are trapped in their homes, unable to move until they have found the money. Others have received repossession notices.

Their plight is a grim reminder of the excesses of the overheated market of the 1980s, when people struggling to get on the housing ladder were lured into schemes, the success of which depended on constantly rising prices. Housing advisers and agents gave warning this week that the current recovery, particularly in London and the South East, could herald renewed efforts to develop such mortgage deals and called on buyers to remember the lessons of the housing boom.

At the beginning of the 1990s, developers targeted po-

tential buyers who could not afford the whole cost of a home as prices peaked and interest rates rose. Such buyers took out loans for a proportion of the purchase, typically 50 per cent to 80 per cent, and undertook to pay the balance to the developer in five years in a shared equity or deferred arrangement.

The assumption was that house prices would continue to rise sharply over the five-year period, allowing borrowers to use their increased equity to take out a further loan to cover the rest of the purchase price.

However, the value of some of the properties has nearly halved and borrowers cannot pay the balance. In one case a couple on a Colchester estate who bought a flat valued at £72,000 with a £36,000 loan in 1991 now owe another £36,000 to Fairclough Homes, the developer. Their home is worth just £38,000.

Colchester Borough Council's housing advice unit reports a number of similar cases elsewhere on the same

estate. Phil Harris, of the Housing Advice Unit, says: "These homes were built in the Colchester commuter belt when prices were really high in 1988-89. Prices were rising by about 20 per cent a year. Now they have fallen by about 35 per cent."

Neil Heward, of the Colchester Mortgage Centre, a local mortgage broker, says: "This scheme worked on two basic beliefs: one, that people would be able to afford a loan after five years that they could not afford at the beginning; and two, that prices would continue to increase."

Mr Heward says he refused to arrange loans for buyers who were signing up for the Fairclough shared equity schemes because he believed they were too risky.

Critics of shared equity schemes argue that lenders were prepared to advance shared equity mortgages because they believed they would not be overexposed, even if house prices fell. In many cases they were lending only 50 per cent of the property's value. But the Halifax, which was one of a number of lenders arranging mortgages for buyers in Colchester, said no one had foreseen the falls in prices.

Lenders have also consistently argued that they are only in the business of providing information and should not be held responsible for advice. Even now, the Council of Mortgage Lenders' code of conduct, which requires lenders to be responsible for their advice, does not yet cover

intermediaries, including developers, who arrange loans.

Fairclough declined to comment specifically but repeated a statement made this week to BBC Radio 4's *You and Yours*: "We are fully aware of the difficulties being experienced by homeowners... and we are concerned to explore every possibility to find a solution acceptable to both the homeowners and ourselves."

Colchester and other parts of the South East saw some of the sharpest falls in house prices in the recession. Now London and the South East are experiencing the biggest rises, as they did in the 1980s. The Nationwide Building Society's quarterly regional house price index, to be published next week, is expected to reveal that prices in London have risen by an average of 21 per cent in the last year. The outer metropolitan area has seen rises averaging 12 per cent, while prices in the South East have risen 9 per cent.

But apparently large rises disguise the fact that the recovery is patchy, according to Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy of the National Association of Estate Agents. "There have been spectacular rises, but some people are still having a problem selling," he said.

He warned buyers not to be tempted into mortgages which rely on large rises in prices, saying: "This is dangerous. People mustn't take out deferred schemes as a method of getting a deferred property. If you are near the mark for getting a loan you should think twice."

SARA MCCONNELL

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## WEEKEND MONEY LETTERS

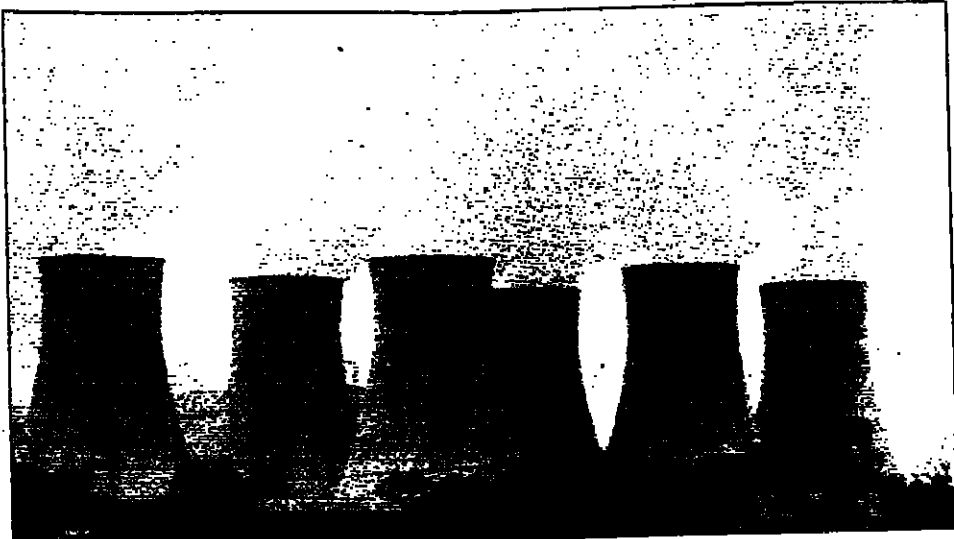
## Pensioners are the victims of windfall tax

From Mr M.C. Fitzpatrick  
Sir, There has been much recent comment (Weekend Money, March 29) about the windfall tax, whereby approximately £5 billion will be levied from the privatised regulated utilities (Prus). This £5 billion will then be spent on a three-year programme to put the long-term unemployed back to work.

While I would not wish to comment on whether Labour's overall proposal is sensible or not, it is worth examining the question of who will bear the windfall tax and how much it will cost each person affected.

There are about five million individuals with shares in a Pru: separately there are about 17 million members of pension funds, most of which will have something invested (directly or indirectly) in Pru shares. If the windfall tax affects the value of Pru shares, about half the UK electorate will be affected. But what long-term impact will the windfall tax have on Pru share values?

This firm recently published a Pru share valuation model; this suggests that a £5 billion windfall tax would, on average, lead to a reduction of



Shadow over utilities: windfall tax fears have already hit the prices of utility shares

about 5 per cent in the value of a typical Pru share.

They have, in fact, fallen by about 5 per cent during March (against a broadly static FT index taking the month as a whole). This fall suggests that as the scope and certainty of the windfall tax becomes clearer, the tax is now largely priced into the value of Pru shares. Does this mean that the 22 million people who directly or indirectly own Pru

shares will not lose out as a result of the windfall tax?

No — the impact of the windfall tax on a Pru shareholder is to cause a 5 per cent reduction in the long-term value of his investment: his shares will be worth 5 per cent less than if the windfall tax had never been invented.

An individual shareholder with £5,000 worth of Pru shares will have lost about £250, while a personal pension

plan with an underlying £10,000 invested in Pru shares will have lost about £500.

The moral of all this is that there is no such thing as a victimless £5 billion tax — but then whoever claimed there was?

Yours faithfully,  
MAURICE FITZPATRICK,  
Senior Tax Consultant,  
Chantrey Vellacott,  
Russell Square House,  
10-12 Russell Square, WC1.

## Share allocation at Norwich Union

From Mr R. Shah

Sir, According to the Norwich Union flotation circular, the free allocation of shares is to be broadly on the basis that "all qualifying members will be entitled to a fixed allocation of 150 shares, irrespective of the number of policies held" and that those "who have one or more with profit policies which receive a regular bonus will be entitled to an additional 150 shares "at least".

This, however, is in general terms. The circular does not contain any further details from which policyholders may assess for themselves exactly how many shares they should expect to receive. Admittedly, as the document goes on to observe, all qualifying members will have been sent a Provisional Statement of Free Share Allocation but such statement merely sets out the gross figure of the free shares, without showing how it is arrived at.

It is unclear why the Norwich Union management have shied away from including in the circular information on the precise formulae to be applied in determining the additional allocation. In this respect, the Woolwich conversion document is much more forthright, with its ready reckoner tables, while in the case of the Alliance & Leicester Building Society, its standard allocation of 250 shares poses no problem.

Yours faithfully,  
RAMNIK SHAH,  
Preuener & Co.  
Solicitors,  
Elm House,  
113-115 London Road,  
Mitcham,  
Surrey.

## Welcomed with open arms



From Mr D.M. Feingold,  
Sir, Might I enter the ring to assist Frank Bruno with his choice of "tax haven" (Know a nice tax haven, Harry? March 29). Contrary to the information in your article, Switzerland (like the UK) can be a very attractive tax haven for non-Swiss citizens who choose to live there.

There are a number of special visa schemes for those with high incomes, which limits the amount of Swiss tax they pay to very modest levels. In addition, for a variety of international entertainers, sportsmen and super-rich, whose main source of income is outside Switzerland, bespoke arrangements can be made. A good example would be the late Richard Burton,

who spent the last few years of his life in Switzerland. Others include Jackie Stewart (the former racing driver) and Peter Ustinov.

Finally, if Frank wants to sample the Swiss lifestyle, without any of the above formalities, he can try Campione D'Italia. This is a part of Italy located on the lakeside opposite the Swiss town of Lugano, yet physically within Switzerland. No taxes of any kind are levied and he would only need an EC passport.

Round two to Frank! Yours faithfully,  
DANIEL FEINGOLD,  
Strategic Tax Planning,  
UK & International Tax Consultants,  
38 Clive Lodge,  
Shirehall Lane, NW4.

## Maturities at Britannia Life

From Mr Brian Millhouse

Sir, In response to the letter from Mr A.V. Purnell (Scots take their revenge, March 22), I fully appreciate Mr Purnell's grievance and am truly sorry he has been inconvenienced.

To ease any worries that this might have raised with our other customers, I wish to reassure all of them that the current situation in one of the Maturities Departments at Britannia Life is a temporary one. We have strengthened management within the area and anticipate being back up to date by the end of April.

The delay relates solely to policies sold by the Life Association of Scotland, a company purchased by Britannia in 1993. Maturity payments on policies sold by Britannia Life and Crusader (another company acquired by Britannia some years ago), are not affected. We have written to all of our customers who may be affected advising them of the situation and apologising for the inconvenience.

We will ensure that no affected customer is financially disadvantaged and all late payments will automatically include additional interest. Yours faithfully,  
BRIAN MILLHOUSE,  
Head of Customer Service,  
Britannia Life Limited,  
Britannia Court,  
50 Bothwell Street,  
Glasgow.

Letters to Weekend Money are welcomed, but *The Times* regrets it cannot give individual replies or advice. No legal responsibility can be accepted for the advice or statements given in these columns.

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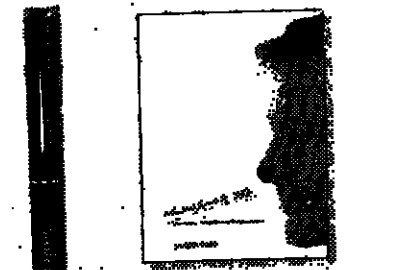
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100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## CHEMICALS

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100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## DISTRIBUTORS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## ELECTRICITY

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## ENGINEERING

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## INSURANCE

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## FOOD MANUFACTURERS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## HEALTHCARE

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## LEISURE &amp; HOTELS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## MINING

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## PROPERTY

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## TEXTILES &amp; APPAREL

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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## TRANSPORT

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
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## WATER

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## ALTERNATIVE INV MARKET

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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## SHORTS (under 5 years)

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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100	95	100	100	0	0	100

## LONGS (over 15 years)

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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## MEDIUMS (5 to 15 years)

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## BRITISH FUNDS

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
100	95	100	100	0	0	100

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**RETAILERS, FOOD**

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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100	95	100	100	0	0	100

**RETAILERS, GENERAL**

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
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## EQUITY PRICES

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## EQUITY PRICES

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## EQUITY PRICES

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## EQUITY PRICES

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
100	95	100	100	0	0	100
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## EQUITY PRICES

385	405	74 Central Trans R	8%	
546	477	BAA	504	+ 4
572	583	Bt Airways	632	- 5
157		89 Clarkson G/H	101	
112		139 Clydesdale Ops	139	+ 1
167		385 Comet	386	+ 1
444		235 Den	236	
257		105 Emswiler	131	
156		72 Equinecol Ut	72	+ 1
88		240 Equinecol	240	- 1




[illegible]







**TEXT BY GEORGE RAE AND JAMES WILLOUGHBY**

Similar to last year's winner, Rough Quest, in that fine run in Cheltenham Gold Cup makes him well weighted. Clear chance, but less experienced than Rough Quest and confidence reduced by tendency to make jumping mistakes.  
**Betting:** 12-1 

(Handicap: grade III: £178,146: 4m 4f) (40 runners)

1	10/P32-P	MASTER OATS 48 (BF,G,S) (P Matthews) K Bailey 11-11-0.....	N Williamson	80
2	21-6P2P	NAHTHEN LAD 23 (G,S) (Mrs P Hennings) Mrs J Pitman 8-10-9.....	J F Tiley	81
3	214-335	LO STREGONE 42 (BF,F,G,S) (Mrs S Clegg) T Tate 11-10-4.....	G Bradley	80
4	F/1S1-51	SUNY RAY 42 (G,S) (Uplands Bloodstock) C Brooks 8-10-3.....	J Osborne	89
5	15-2605	FEATHERED GALE 34 (F,G,S) (M O'Connor) A L T Moore (Ire) 10-10-3.....	F Woods	81
6	2125-3U	AVRO ANSON 63 (F,G) (The Mirror Punters Club) M Camacho 9-10-2.....	P Miven	90
7	1F5/1P2	BELMONT KING 28 (S) (Mrs B Bond) P Nicholls 9-10-1.....	R Johnson	84
8	52/10-P0	BUCKBOARD BOUNCE 7 (F,G,S) (R Ogden) G Richards 11-10-1.....	P Carberry	80
9	01-241P	BISHOPS' HALL 28 (F,G,S) (T Carroll) R Alner 11-10-1.....	D Bridgwater	80
10	231112	LORD GYLENE 21 (BF,G,S) (S Clarke) S Brookshaw 9-10-0.....	A Dobbin	87
11	11U-021	WYLDHE HIDE 34 (G,S) (J McManus) A L Moore (Ire) 10-10-0.....	C F Swan	93
12	5P114P	DEXTRA DOVE 42 (F,G,S) (Dextra Lighting Systems) S Earle 10-10-0.....	C Maude	82
13	30-1551	ANTONIN 48 (F,G,S) (G Bailey Ltd) Mrs S Bramall (Ire) 9-10-0.....	C O'Dwyer	94
14	11F12-P	SMITH'S BAND 35 (G,S) (A Smith) Mrs J Pitman 9-10-0.....	R Dunwoody	85
15	F11300	NEW CO 24 (G,S) (Exors of Mrs L Ronan) M Morris (Ire) 9-10-0.....	D J Casey	80
16	4121F4	GO BALLISTIC 23 (F,G,S) (Mrs B Lockhart) J O'Shea 8-10-0.....	M A Fitzgerald	97
17	11F2-14	GENERAL WOLFE 28 (BF,G,S) (Winning Line Racing) T Forster 8-10-0.....	L Wyer	84
18	4-12232	GLENOT 113 (BF,F,G,S) (D Yardy) K Bailey 9-10-0.....	S McNeill	73
19	11-2553	VALIANT WARRIOR 14 (F,G,S) (P Sellers) M Hammond 9-10-0.....	R Garrity	68
20	5P5344	KILLESBIN 21 (C,G,S) (H Manners) H Manners 11-10-0.....	S Curran	75
21	50U-PP4	MASTER BOSTON 2 (G,S) (M Oldham) R Woodhouse 9-10-0.....	NON RUNNER	-
22	21-225U	STRAIGHT TALK 133 (F,G,S) (Mrs C Paterson) P Nicholls 10-10-0.....	Mr J Tizzard	72
23	P0F11P	NUAFFE 38 (B,G,S) (J Doyle) P Fahy (Ire) 12-10-0.....	T Mitchell	61
24	011-320	NORTHERN HIDE 24 (F,G,S) (Northern Hide Ptnrs) M Salaman 11-10-0.....	P Holley	74
25	P3-1441	TURNING TRIX 35 (G,S) (M Davies) D Nicholson 10-10-0.....	J R Kavanagh	79
26	12223F	RIVER MANDATE 25 (V,G,S) (Anne Duchess of Westminster) T Forster 10-10-0.....	A Thornton	76
27	45U5P0	GRANGE BRAKE 25 (C,F,G,S) (H Mould) N Twiston-Davies 11-10-0.....	D Walsh	75
28	321142	EVANGELICA 79 (BF,F,S) (M Pipe Racing Club) M Pipe 7-10-0.....	R Supple	68
29	554004	BACK BAR 20 (G,S) (P McCarthy) A L T Moore (Ire) 9-10-0.....	T P Treacy	66
30	4UQ-240	DAKYNYS BOY 49 (G,S) (A Parker) N Twiston-Davies 12-10-0.....	T J Murphy	70
31	554-05F	SCRIBBLER 21 (G,S) (M Faman) G McCourt 11-10-0.....	D Fortt	59
32	442/2-P4	CELTIC ABBEY 23 (F,G,S) (G Powell) Miss V Williams 9-10-0.....	B Powell	60
33	11-3F33	FULL OF OATS 35 (BF,G,S) (I MacDonald) Miss H Knight 11-10-0.....	J Cullyoty	67
34	0/5P-246	CAMELOT KNIGHT 25 (S) (M Gates) N Twiston-Davies 11-10-0.....	C Llewellyn	68
35	3P2-045	MUGONI BEACH 43 (B,BF,F,G,S) (J Ennis) M Pipe 12-10-0.....	J Evans	66
36	U223-36	PLASTIC SPACEAGE 49 (G,S) (G Dalziel) J Old 14-10-0.....	G Upton	66
37	1340-60	OVER THE STREAM 19 (F,G) (J Gordon & E Gordon) Miss M Milligan 11-10-0...	A S Smith	59
38	35P/1F-	DON'T LIGHT UP 347 (B,G,S) (I Naylor) Miss V Williams 11-10-0.....	Mr R Thornton	58
39	32-10P6	PINK GIN 36 (F,G,S) (Mrs M Francis) M Hammond 10-10-0.....	Mr C Bonner	58
40	533833	SPUFFINGTON 28 (G,S) (J Clopet) J Gifford 9-10-0.....	P Hide	58

Long handicap: Lord Gyllene 9-13, Wyldie Hide 9-13, Dextra Dove 9-13, Antonin 9-13, Smith's Band 9-10, New Co 9-9, Go Ballistic 9-8, General Wolfe 9-8, Glenot 9-7, Valiant Warrior 9-6, Killieshin 9-3, Master Boston 9-3, Straight Talk 9-2, Nuafie 9-2, Northern Hide 9-0, Turning Trix 8-12, River Mandate 8-12, Grange Brake 8-12, Evangelica 8-10, Back Bar 8-10, Dakyns Boy 8-9, Scribbler 8-8, Celtic Abbey 8-7, Full Of Oats 8-6, Camelot Knight 8-6, Mugoni Beach 8-4, Plastic Spaceage 8-2, Over The Stream 8-2, Don't Light Up 8-2, Pink Gin 8-0; Suffington 8-0.

1996: ROUGH QUEST 10-10-7 M A Fitzgerald (7-1 fav) T Casey 27 ran

**BETTING:** Coral: 9-1 Suny Bay, Lord Gyllene, Wyldie Hide, 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Smith's Band, 14-1 Feathered Gale, Lo Stregone, 18-1 Antonin, Nahthen Lad, 20-1 General Wolfe, 22-1 Belmont King, 25-1 Buckboard Bounce, 28-1 Turning Trax, 33-1 Dextra Dove, Killeshin, Master Oats, 40-1 New Co, Northern Hide, 50-1 Bishops Hall, Evangelica, Glernot, River Mandate. Straight Talk, Valiant Warrior. 66-1 Celtic Abbev, Nuaife, 100-1 others.

Ladbroke: 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Lord Gyllene, Sunny Bay, Wyldie Hide, 11-1 Lo Stregone, 12-1 Smith's Band, 14-1 Antonin, General Wolfe, 16-1 Nahthen Lad, 20-1 Feathered Gale, Turning Trix, 25-1 Master Oats, 28-1 Belmont King, Killshin, 33-1 Buckboard Bounce, 40-1 Dextra Dove, Evangelica, New Co, Northern Hide, River Mandate, 50-1 Bishops Hall, Grange Brake, 66-1 Full Of Oats, Celtic Abbey, Glenmot, Valiant Warrior, Straight Talk, 100-1 Nuffie, Back Bar, Mugoni Beach, Pink Gin, 150-1 Scribbler, Dakyns Boy, Spuffington, Camelot Knight, 200-1 Don't Light Up, Over The Stream, Plastic Spaceage.

**Total:** 8-1 Suny Bay, 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Lord Gyllene, Wyldie Hide, 14-1 Lo Stregone, Nahthen Lad, Smith's Band, 16-1 Antonin, General Wolfe, 20-1 Belmont King, Buckboard Bounce, Feathered Gale, 25-1 Master Oats, 33-1 Dextra Dove, 40-1 Bishoos Hall, Killieshin, New Co. Turning Trix, 50-1 others.


**William Hill:** 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Lord Gyllene, Suny Bay, Wyldie Hide, 12-1 Lo Stregone, Smith's Band, 14-1 General Wolfe, 16-1 Antonin, Nahthen Lad, 25-1 Belmont King, Buckboard Dance, Feathered Gale, Killshin, Master Oats, 33-1 Dextra Dove, Turning Trix, 40-1 Evangelina, New Co, River Mandate, Valiant Mariner, 50-1 Bishops Hall, Glernot, Northern Hide. 66-1 Bark Bark. Full Of Oats. Grance Brake. Muoni Beach. Straight Talk. 100-1 others.

**27** **GRANGE BRAKE**  
Jockey: David Walsh  
Unreliable customer with more poor efforts than good in his recent record. Capable of useful performances on his day though, and if the challenge of the National spurs his interest could go well at a big price.  
Best of: 85-1

**20 KILLESHPIN**  
**Jockey: Sean Curran**  
 In excellent form last year but has struggled to recapture his sparkle this term. No dots about his stamina, ground poses a far bigger problem. Well suited by soft ground, which he is unlikely to encounter here.  
**Betting: 33-1**

**10 LORD GYLLENE**  
 Jockey: Tony Dobbin  
 Sure-footed in three front-running victories this season but found out in better class last time. Well handicapped and stays well, question mark is that ground may be quicker than ideal for him. Chance all the same.  
**Betting: 10-1**

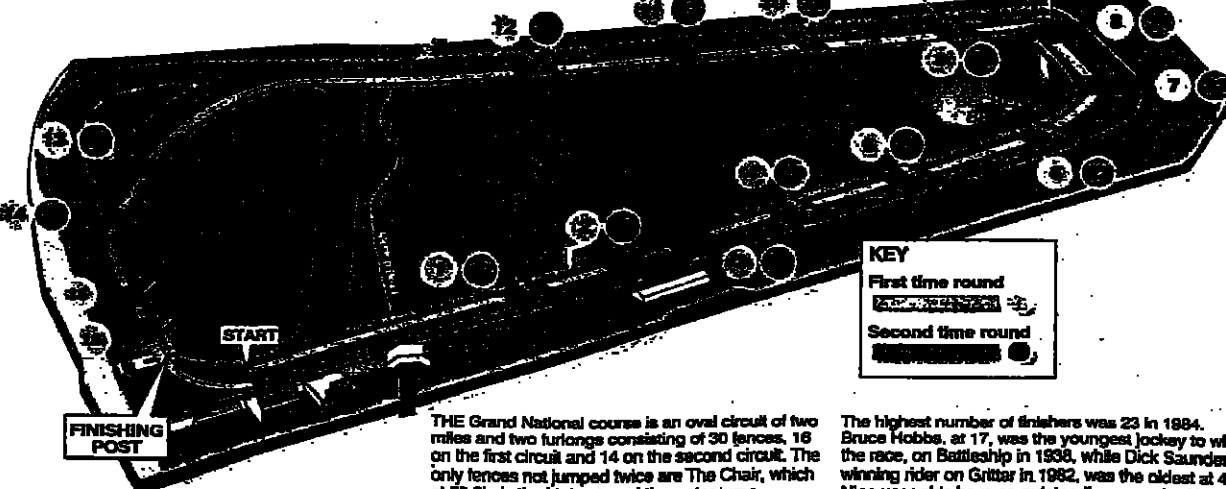
**3 LO STREGONE**  
Jockey: **Graham Bradley**  
Lampooned by his critics as 'Slow Stregone', a reference to his abundance of stamina over speed. Has a bit of quality, though, and, if his dismal display at Haydock last time can be forgiven, not without a chance. The ground will suit. Best/loss: 1/4s



**21 MASTER BOSTON**  
**Jockey:**  
 Unseated his rider at the second furlong in the highest triumph of the year, finishing on Thursday. Well ridden and almost completely out of the saddle, he was very much a free rider.  
**Beating:** 100-1.

**1 MASTER OATS**  
Jockey: Norman Williamson  
Class act at his best. Seventh under 11st 10lb two years ago when attempting to complete the Cheltenham Gold Cup-Grand National double. Only four runs since, without a win, and has a stiff task on ground faster than Ideal.  
Betfing: 33-1

## AINTREE'S ANNUAL TEST OF FENCES



THE Grand National course is an oval circuit of two miles and two furlongs consisting of 30 fences, 16 on the first circuit and 14 on the second circuit. The only fences not jumped twice are The Chair, which at 5ft 2in is the highest, and the water jump. The race was first run on February 26, 1839, when the winner was the aptly-named Lottery. His winning time was 14min 53sec, whereas Mr Frisk, the 1990 winner, triumphed in a record 8min 47.8sec.

The highest number of finishers was 23 in 1984. Bruce Hobbs, at 17, was the youngest jockey to ride the race, on Battleship in 1938, while Dick Saunders, winning rider on Gritter in 1982, was the oldest at 49. Nine-year-olds have an outstanding record, with 31 victories this century. Eight-year-olds are the next most successful age bracket, with 14 winners. Red Rum, successful in 1973, 1974 and 1977 is the only horse to have won three Grand Nationals.

**BBC1**



**MUGONI BEACH**  
**Jockey: Jamie Evans**  
 Evans aims to become first Australian jockey to win National since William Wylie, scored on Jack Hammer in 1926. Likely to find himself beached on this Pipe-trained outsider who faces a severe test of his jumping.  
**Betting: 66-1**

**NAHTHEN LAD**  
Jockey: Jason Tittley  
Reurites 1995 Grand National-winning trainer and jockey team of Jenny Pitman and Tittley. Last season's high-class form approached only once in four runs this term. Chance on best efforts, but may be better on softer ground. Betting: 16-1

**NEW CO**  
Jockey: David Casey  
Dogged by jumping mistakes this season, although has still managed to win twice. Regular rider Conor O'Dwyer's decision to partner Antorin is hardly a vote of confidence. Casey makes his first National appearance.  
Betting: 40-1

**NORTHERN HIDE**  
Jockey: Paul Holey  
Taffy Salaman, who trained Churchilltown Boy to finish second to Red Rum as long ago as 1977, returns to the National 17 years after his last attempt. However, holds only a slim chance of putting the record straight.  
Betting: 40-1



**NUAFFE**  
**Jockey:** Terry Mitchell  
 Jumping errors, including a fall in the National two years ago, are all too easily found in his record. Only one win over the last two seasons and, with the ground riding faster than is ideal for him, has only modest prospects.  
**Betting:** 66-1




**OVER THE STREAM**  
**Jockey: Adie Smith**  
 Thirteenth in last years National when trained by Kim Bailey and has since joined Kate Milligan. Another completion looks the limit of his ambitions but gives Smith, eight years a jockey, his first ride in the big race. Over and out.  
**Betting: 100-1**




**PINK GIN**  
**Jockey:** Chris Bonner  
 Shares, with Spuffington, the dubious distinction of being officially the worst horse in the race. Stays forever, and Bonner has a fine record over the big fences. But no reason to think his backers will be feeling in the pink.  
**Betting:** 100-1

**36 PLASTIC SPACEAGE**  
**Jockey:** Guy Upton  
 Odds: One horse in the field.  
 Could hardly be faced with a more demanding task, being asked to end a long losing run from an unfavourable position in the handicap.  
**Betting:** 100-1



**SCRIBBLER**  
Jockey: Dan Fort  
Without a win since November 1994 and this is some place to try to end that sequence. Chance not helped by fall last time in the Midlands National at Uttoxeter. Not one to scribble on a betting slip today.  
Besttime: 100-1




**SMITH'S BAND**  
**Jockey: Richard Dumwoody**  
 Unites impeccable National records of Jenny Pittman and Dumwoody (two wins apiece). Progressive and should not be condemned on reappearance run. Chance, but confidence lessened by reservations about stamina.  
**British: 20-1**



**SPUFFINGTON**  
**Jockey: Philip Hyde**  
 Trainer Josh Gifford secured his place in National lore with the tairytale victory of Aldenti in 1981. Little hope of an encore today as, according to the official handicapper at least, there is no worse horse in the race.  
**Ref: 100**


**STRAIGHT TALK**  
**Jockey: Joe Tizzard**  
 Notable primarily for carrying the hopes of 17-year-old amateur rider Tizzard. Not particularly well handicapped and dislodged no less a jockey than the champion, Tony McCoy, over the National fences last time out.  
**Britannia 50-1**

**4. SUNY BAY**  
Jockey: Jamie Osborne  
Seeks £100,000 bonus for connections after winning Greensteele Grand National Trial Chase at Haydock in February. Well handicapped, classy and, despite some reservations about the ground, has a fine chance.  
Bettings: 8-1



**TURNING TRICK**  
**Jockey: John Kavanagh**  
**Aimed at the National since winning at Newbury last month. His trainer, David Nicholson, is in sparkling form and this could turn out to be a case for Kavanagh QC, quietly confident of a good performance.**  
**Beatings: 40-1**

**18** **VILLANT WAHROH**  
Jockey: Russ Gerrity  
Consistent enough but does most of his racing at around 2 1/2 miles, so faces a bit of a shock with another two miles to cover here. Gerrity has enjoyed a fine season but will need all his magic to bring this one home in front.  
Betting: 40-1



**Jockey: Charlie Swan**  
**Not out of the Irish. Not out of it when**  
**unsuspecting rider six fences from**  
**home last year. Live hope, but**  
**ground perhaps faster than ideal.**  
**Betting: 9-1**  
**VERDICT: 1, SUNNY BAY;**  
**2, Avro Arson; 3, General Wolfe;**  
**4, Turning Trick**

**Keeping in  
step with  
Smith's Ban**

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**WAVE**



# Keeping in step with Smith's Band

One good thing about travelling the country by car is that you have a rare opportunity to think. Normally it is three hours from my home to Aintree but, like so many others heading to Liverpool on Thursday, I got caught up in the motorway closures. There was serious gridlock and, needless to say, plenty of time to consider the big race.

It's probably as well I am not superstitious. I found myself wondering whether the chaos was indicative of what we could expect on Grand National day. No racing event has greater potential for chaos than 40 horses charging around Aintree.

There's little point in thinking too hard about how the race might unfold. I learnt that lesson as I approached the first fence on my first ride in 1985. I'd spent hours going through the runners, making a note of the bad jumpers and resolving not to follow any of them into a fence. Sure enough, as I headed for the first on West Tip, I found myself on the heels of Solihull Sport, a 100-1 non-hoper. He rushed ahead of me with his head in the air and he jumped right across my path. I was very fortunate not to end up on the floor - although I managed to achieve that, without outside assistance, at Becher's second time round.

Full form guide for the Grand National ... 41

Obviously you have to be more aware than usual of the loose horses and what they might do. Otherwise, I try to ride the race the same as any other. It's a big occasion, the world is watching and riding in the National is always a huge thrill. But jockeys must keep their minds on the job. As at Cheltenham, it is too easy to lose concentration. It's about minimising the risks: not letting the distractions affect your performance.

It's funny how the Grand National produces anomalies among the statistics. Some fine jockeys have a terrible record but the race has been kind to me. I've been in the money seven times and the victories of West Tip and Minnehoma are special memories. This time I ride Smith's Band for Jenny Pitman, whose horse, Superior Finish, I rode into third place last year. There is no finer trainer than Jenny when it comes to the National.

If you look at Smith's Band's form this season you couldn't really entertain him. Ideally, he would have had another run but Jenny is very happy with him. She knows what it takes and I am encouraged to hear her speak so well of the horse. Smith's Band stays and jumps well and had some solid form last season. I've never sat on him before - the ground has been too firm for me to school him in the build-up. However, I've seen plenty

RICHARD DUNWOODY



On minimising the risks at Aintree

of him and I'm anticipating a good experience.

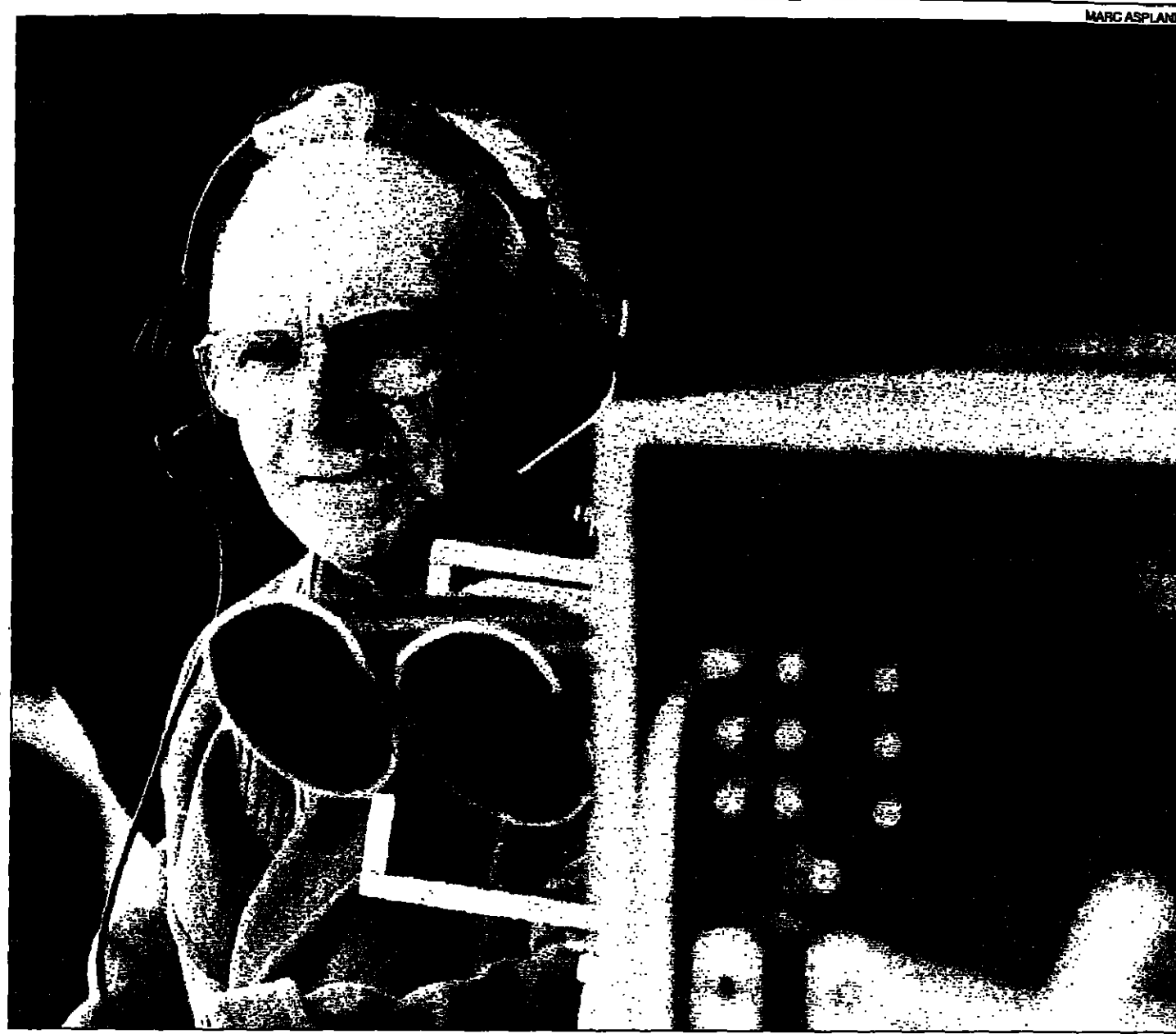
My approach to riding the race is to come down the middle of the track. Jenny likes her horses to race down the inside, so that aspect needs to be settled in the paddock beforehand. Otherwise, I'll be anxious to let Smith's Band find his rhythm, which I believe is fundamental to his chance. It's a great feeling to ride a horse that responds to the unique challenge of Aintree and is comfortable with the pace of the race.

On the first circuit I won't be too concerned about my position. I'll be looking after Smith's Band as best I can. Only after jumping the water, in front of the stands, will I assess the situation. I'll be checking on the progress of the fancied horses and thinking about taking up a position. This is where the real race starts. The first circuit is strictly about survival.

I'll be keeping a close eye on Antonin and Wyde Hide, two horses I think have great chances. I was very impressed with Antonin at Punchestown last time. Wyde Hide ran well before unseating his jockey last year and he has always struck me as a National type. Of the others, Go Ballistic's fourth in the Gold Cup was his best run yet, but he has fallen three times in the last two seasons. Sunny Bay might just lead us all a merry dance. He stays well but the doubt about him is that he has broken blood vessels in the past. That could recur at any time.

Those with an eye for detail will notice I'm putting up 3lb overweight on Smith's Band at 10st 3lb. I did the same on Superior Finish last year - I don't want to go out there feeling too rough from a diet of wasting and saunas. Riding in the National is physically exhausting and all jockeys are thrilled just to complete the course. We tell each other we cannot ask for more than that, but we'll all be dreaming just the same.

Everyone who leaves the weighing room at around 3.30 this afternoon will be desperately hoping to return after an interview with Desmond Lynam.



O'Sullivan, in familiar commentary box pose with binoculars at the ready, covers his fiftieth and last Grand National today

## O'Sullivan approaches final furlong of long and distinguished career

Richard Evans speaks to the man who has been "the voice of racing" for 50 years

The start half a century ago was hardly auspicious. After one of his earliest BBC commentaries, a decidedly unenthusiastic director of outside broadcasts insisted more practice was required. His mother was even more blunt. "Darling, I saw you on television yesterday and you looked absolutely ghastly. I do hope you are never going to do that again."

The maternal advice was ignored and this afternoon Peter O'Sullivan, 79, will climb the 76 steps to a commentary position high above Aintree racecourse for his 50th - and final - Grand National. For many, who choose the world's most famous steeplechase for their annual flutter, the race will never be quite the same again.

The unmistakable gravelly tones, the rat-a-tat-tat delivery and the inevitable end of race crescendo have made "The Voice" as much a part of our national heritage as the race itself. And yet, ironically, the personal trademarks imitated by the likes of Mike Yarwood and Rory Bremner were the very reasons O'Sullivan came in for criticism when he first began speaking in the post-war years.

"My voice used to go up and I could not get the damn thing

down. It was probably the pressure and the excitement which raised it. Certainly, I was widely criticised for talking too quickly. I have letters from Peter Dimmock who became head of outside broadcasts saying I must talk slower."

No instant success: no great encouragement and, all those years ago, virtually no facilities to work from, which exposed O'Sullivan's fragile health to the worst of nature's elements. "This is one of the great mysteries: how I have survived physically for this long because it is not as though I set off with any great advantage in that respect. I had a very moderate chest, a tendency to bronchitis and flu, so it is amazing."

"I went regularly from Lincoln to Liverpool with the flu. Three days at the Carlisle and you cannot imagine how bleak and cold it was. The most Arctic day on the Rowley mile at Newmarket was like the Cote d'Azur by comparison. It was unbelievable: it would cut right through you. So it was a most unlikely career.

What compounds the improbability is the duration. Indeed, at the start of this decade, the idea of completing 50 Grand Nationals seemed the longest of long shots.

A few long-remembered outsiders have been called home - and tipped or backed - during his half century and for O'Sullivan, the Grand National is the race which touches the nerve of the nation. "It is without question the top. The Derby is exhilarating and exciting for different reasons, but the National is elevated to this emotional level by one's admiration for both horses and riders; the challenge that they face and for the sheer athletic achievement of the winning combination."

The victory of Merryman II in 1960 holds special memories. He suggested to Miss Winnifred Wallace, owner of the hunter chaser, that Neville Crump would be the ideal trainer. O'Sullivan had an ante-post tickle months before the race - £1,000-£28 to win and £50-£10 to complete the first circuit - and then called him home in what was the first televised National.

"The equipment we had was diabolical. The monitor was dreadful and there were all the ingredients for disaster. The producer was screaming and there were plenty of panic stations. At the end I felt rung out like a rag but apparently the broadcast had gone well and Merryman won. Everything had come right."

The National without O'Sullivan will seem like Morecambe without Wise, strawberries without cream. And yet it could have been all very different. If he could have foreseen the "appalling" way the BBC stopped covering the Derby and lost other prestige meetings, he might have taken a generous financial offer to join ITV years ago. Even now, he sympathises with recent criticism of the BBC's rather staid style of presenting day-to-day racing.

Today he has more important matters. The Princess Royal will unveil a bust of O'Sullivan after the first race before joining him in the commentary box. And then there is his last National call. "I am not very relaxed until the race has started but once it is underway I feel I am with them..." This afternoon hundreds of millions of viewers around the globe will be with him.

## Lo Stregone has history on his side in National challenge

By JACK WATERMAN

IN JUST over the past two decades a sea-change has taken place in the character of the Martell Grand National. The fences, of course, have been modified but still need jumping, as was strikingly proved in the John Hughes Trophy Chase this Thursday when only nine of the 20 starters completed the course. Of more significance, however, is a remarkable shift in the most common age of winners.

Traditionally, this used to be nine: from 1946 up to 1974, 14 of this age group succeeded, plus eight eight-year olds and only six older horses. But from 1975 onwards, the break-down has become: five 12-year olds, six 11-year olds and four ten-year olds, with only four aged nine, and two aged eight.

### Handicap

In the same period from 1975, only two winners have run off the minimum weight of ten stone. The other 19 were all in the handicap proper. Today, there are only nine in that category, and, because the participation of Master Oats has given such a lopsided look to the weights, consideration can be extended to fancied runners such as Lord Gyllene, Wyde Hide and Antonin, who are only a pound out of the handicap.

### Stamina

Those with ability to see out the extreme distance include Lo Stregone, Lord Gyllene and Sunny Bay.

### Betting

Outright favourites have a poor record: only two have succeeded in the past 10 runnings, including Rough Quest, who led the betting market at 7-1 last year. Yet other well-backed horses frequently succeed. Favourites apart, in the past quarter-century, 14 winners have been priced between 13-2 and 16-1.

### Trained in Ireland

Five horses take part on the 150th anniversary of their first triumph, with Matthew in 1847, L'Escargot in 1975 was the most recent success, however. Notably Wyde Hide and Antonin will be going for a change of luck this afternoon.

### Jockeys

Richard Dunwoody has the best record with two victories, and four other times in the first four. Other winning riders are Jason Titley, Mick Fitzgerald and Carl Llewellyn.

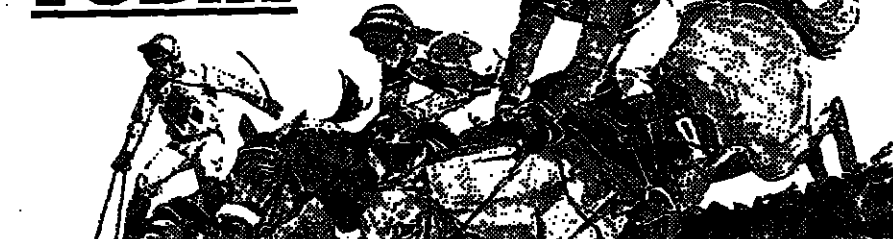
### Trainers

Jenny Pitman richly deserves her title of "Queen of Aintree": two winners and four lesser places. Kim Bailey, Gordon Richards, Tim Forster and Martin Pipe are others with past victories.

### Verdict

LO STREGONE is given the vote over Lord Gyllene, Antonin and Nahthen Lad.

## £1 MILLION FREE BETS GIVEAWAY TODAY\*



### MARTELL GRAND NATIONAL

4 1/2 miles, Aintree 3.45pm, Live on BBC TV.

10/1 Avro Anson	40/1 Valiant Warrior
10/1 Go Ballistic	50/1 Bishops Hall
10/1 Lord Gyllene	50/1 Glomot
10/1 Sunny Bay	50/1 Northern Hide
10/1 Wyde Hide	66/1 Back Bar
10/1 Lo Stregone	66/1 Full Of Oats
10/1 Smith's Band	66/1 Grange Brake
10/1 General Wolfe	66/1 Mugoni Beach
10/1 Antonin	66/1 Straight Talk
10/1 Nahthen Lad	100/1 Camelot Knight
25/1 Belmont King	100/1 Celtic Abbey
25/1 Buckboard Bounce	100/1 Dakyns Boy
25/1 Feathered Gale	100/1 Nuafie
25/1 Killashin	100/1 Scribble
25/1 Master Oats	100/1 Pink Gin
25/1 Dextra Dove	150/1 Plastic Spaceage
25/1 Turning Trick	150/1 Spuffington
40/1 Evangelica	200/1 Over The Stream
40/1 New Co	250/1 Don't Light Up
40/1 River Mandate	N/R Master Boston

\*One Million £1 Free Bets will be given away today (one per customer). Redeemable from Monday April 7th.

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TELEPHONE BETTING SERVICES OPEN FROM 8.00AM TODAY

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ON AINTREE RACES TODAY.

WIN UP TO £500,000

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### YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

#### Aintree

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## GOLF 45

Olazabal picks up the swing in New Orleans

## SPORT

## FOOTBALL 47

Leicester lying in wait for Robson's all-stars



SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

Irish challenger can extend growing influence of women on famous steeplechase

# Antonin looks answer to National

BY RICHARD EVANS  
RACING CORRESPONDENT

FOR a race, the public perception of which epitomises machismo and derring-do, the Martell Grand National possesses an enduring female streak. During four decades in the middle of this century, Mrs Mirabel Topham made her formidable presence felt as owner of Aintree.

More recently, Jenny Pitman has breached a long-standing male bastion by training Corbiere and Royal Athlete to win the world's most famous steeplechase. In between, Charlotte Brew became the first woman jockey to ride in the race, while both Geraldine Rees and Rosemary Henderson have since gone one better by completing the course.

As the 38 likely runners face the judge this afternoon for the 150th running of the race, the trend could be endorsed as never before in what could turn out to be the Women's National. My shortlist of six for a race expected to attract £65 million in bets contains three horses trained by the fairer sex.

Although Mrs Pitman has suffered a disappointing season by her standards, the victory of Mudahim in the Irish Grand National on Monday showed that her string is returning to form — and both her runners deserve the closest scrutiny, despite having been pulled up on their most recent outings.

Nahthen Lad, owned by a north-erner and pronounced appropriately "now then lad" as opposed to "naythen lad", ended last season by winning the Sun Alliance Chase at

Cheltenham, a race that regularly provides future National winners. Mr Mulligan, second on that occasion, went on to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup this season.

After a delayed start to this campaign, Nahthen Lad ran a lacklustre race at Haydock, after which he was found to have a sore foot. He then ran superbly over an inadequate trip at Chepstow, before being pulled up on fast ground at Cheltenham last month. However, the signs are that he is returning to form. "He's started misbehaving, which means he is coming back to his best," Mrs Pitman said yesterday.

Smith's Band, an outstanding jumper, has raced once this season when he was pulled up at Newbury five weeks ago. However, he delighted Mrs Pitman in a



Live television coverage from Aintree begins on BBC1 at 1.45pm; the race starts at 3.45

private gallop at the Berkshire course last Saturday. Bought to win the National, he has the assistance of Richard Dunwoody, twice a National winner, but there is a slight stamina doubt.

However, my selection is Antonin, trained by Sue Bramall. Three seasons ago he was one of the most-improved chasers in training, winning both the Racing Post Chase and the Ritz Club Chase, before losing his form in dramatic style.

After signing off last season by finishing eighth in the National but without a win, Mrs Bramall moved from her base at Hutton Sessay, in Yorkshire to Borlough Manor, in Ireland. The change of scenery did the trick and Antonin won the Grand National Trial at Punchestown by a distance six weeks ago.

The preparation for Aintree has gone perfectly and, just as important, the revitalised horse is potentially well treated with ten stone as he has plummeted down the handicaps during his two disappointing

seasons. Having put in a clear round over the National fences 12 months ago, Antonin can provide the Irish with their first winner since L'Escargot in 1975.

Others to consider include Go Ballistic, fourth in the Cheltenham Gold Cup, who is the form choice but is not certain to take to these fences. Lo Stregone, third in the Hennessy and prepared specifically for this race, stays well but is not nicknamed "Slow Stregone" for nothing.

Sunny Bay is a classy performer, but relishes softer going and Charlie Brooks, his trainer, fears the ground will be too fast. Should overnight rain arrive in sufficient quantity, he would come strongly into the reckoning, along with Wyldie Hyde. The prevailing good ground will encourage supporters

of Avro Anson, who loves to hear his hooves rattle.

Lord Gyllene has improved throughout this season but has done most of his racing at Uttoxeter and was no match last year for the likes of Nahthen Lad or Mr Mulligan. Killshin, an out-and-out stayer who won twice beyond four miles last year and looks the best of the outsiders.

However, the horse I fear most is General Wolfe, trained by Tim Forster, who has already sent out the winners of three Nationals. Ignore his disappointing effort at Chepstow four weeks ago as the race came too soon after he had defied top weight when winning at Haydock. He is reported to be back to his best and comes from a yard in top form.

## Preparing to risk all in ultimate challenge

Rob Hughes on the dangers faced today by jockeys and their horses

It is difficult to know where to place the eye or the heart at Aintree this morning. The compulsion to see and to enjoy the 150th Grand National pulls us through the turnstile, the profit, the pain, even the ultimate cost of death in the afternoon, preys on our minds.

"This is a business which can injure the soul as much as the body," Steve Smith, Eccles, that tough Derbyshire former National Hunt rider, once opined. As the three-day Aintree meeting that features the Grand National evolved this week, one could hardly get the words out of one's head.

Between the jockeys' room and the winning enclosure, one sees the human cost. Lorcan Wyer, his face meticulously pieced together after a crushing fall — a horse's hoof having been temporarily embedded into the left side of it — is back at Aintree, where he

most successful rider among the probable 38 who go this afternoon, has just experienced 48 hours that would break, never mind injure, the soul of lesser mortals, or less obsessed individuals.

Dunwoody's Thursday was horrendous. In little more than an hour, he partnered One Man, a horse going well until another rider observed: "You've burst, you've burst!" Blood from the nostrils of One Man, by now flowing over Dunwoody's breeches, signalled a burst blood vessel, and Dunwoody instantly pulled up his mount.

In the next race, Mulligan gave Dunwoody a dramatic fall, from which both horse and rider ruefully got to their feet. And then, in the fourth race, the worst experience on the racecourse: Coonawara, taking a daring leap over Becher's, came down the 6ft 9in drop from the top of the fence to the turf, and even a layman could see the hind leg buckle, could sense that this horse would have to be shot to put him out of his misery. It was the first of two fatalities at Aintree so far.

Dunwoody will not offer a word of acknowledgement to the turmoil, the emotion, the dread of race riding, or the sadness that must lodge inside a man who came down from Becher's so despairingly. Ironically, ten years ago, the same Dunwoody had written of Becher's: "You need a clear approach... if you take it a shade long or short, your horse can come down too close to the brook and lose his hind legs."

Today's is the second National of the week. The Irish was on Monday, and ended with two horses dead. Coq Hardi Affair and The Latvian Lark, and later in that Fairyhouse meeting with one rider, Shane Broderick, on a life-support system in a Dublin hospital. He has, at the very least, serious spinal cord injury, and it may seem too little, too late that the Aintree race today has as its special charity appeal a fund for



Stephen Swiers, riding Mr Boston, suffers a crashing fall at the second last in the Martell Fox Hunters Chase at Aintree yesterday

## Richardson conquers Black

ANDREW RICHARDSON gave Great Britain a fighting chance of reaching the qualifying round for the Davis Cup last night with the performance of a lifetime to beat Byron Black, of Zimbabwe, in five sets (Alix Ramsay writes). It was Richardson's first Davis Cup appearance, his first five-set match and his first victory over a player ranked in the world's top 50.

Until yesterday, Richardson had been hidden in the relative obscurity of the satellite and challenger

circuits, the first rung on the ladder for journeymen professionals. Overcoming cramp in the final set, he outlasted and outfought the more experienced man.

Black, ranked No 46 in Davis Cup report and photograph — 44

the world, had been very complimentary about his younger opponent, claiming that Richardson's big game could do some damage. However, he probably did

not expect that Richardson could overcome the 220 ranking places that separate them.

"I've never played in an atmosphere like it," Richardson, 23, said afterwards, looking a little non-plussed by it all. "I just tried to control the things that I know I can do well."

"I don't think people thought I could win, but I always thought I had a chance. And now we're level with Zimbabwe. I don't see any reason why Jamie [Delgado] can't beat Byron on Sunday."

Tizzard's chance ..... 1  
Racing and politics ..... 20  
Colours guide ..... 42  
O'Sullivan's last call ..... 43  
Richard Dunwoody ..... 43

fell in November: back to face Becher's and the other 29 jumps this afternoon, Jamie Evans, a top Australian jockey eager to make his mark on the world-famous steeplechase, appeared yesterday, barely able to hobble towards the track-side; yet he and his connections still intend to persuade the Jockey Club doctor that his knee injury is no impediment for the National.

There is, heaven help him, a 17-year-old, Joe Tizzard, riding in the race that visibly frightens the most hardened of jockeys. Romance or foolhardiness?

When riders and horses reach for the absolute limits, when they clear the biggest fences put before man under Rules, and do it with exhilarating grace, of course it is uplifting. Yet racing is injurious to more than man. Richard Dunwoody, arguably the

precisely that type of injury and the welfare of jockeys.

Why do they go on? Dunwoody, again, puts the answers into action more telling than words. By the end of the card on Thursday, he was a winner. By yesterday he was the leading jockey of the Grand National meeting, bringing home three more winners over these demanding obstacles.

In particular on Cyborgo in the 3.10, Dunwoody was the master: with hands, heels and knees, with the whip barely flourished, he communicated his exceptional will-power, his determination to be first past the post, to a talented but allegedly lazy racehorse. Dunwoody niggled, cajoled and drove the animal to carry him through. It was the pulse of

horse racing, the thrill of a huge crowd, perhaps the profit of tens of thousands who back from afar.

Two emotions in one, this racing game, and I was struck by one reaction to the incident at Southwell on Tuesday, where a bolting horse had kicked over an infant's pram, miraculously without harming the child. "It is time they barred prams from racecourses," one observer wrote. Child's play, it is not.

□ Penny A Day, trained by Mary Reveley, was put down after breaking a leg in the Oddsins Handicap Hurdle at Aintree yesterday. The seven-year-old, winner of five races over hurdles and over £37,000, shattered his left fore cannon bone when coming down at the eighth flight.



Richard Evans  
Racing Correspondent

1. ANTONIN
2. General Wolfe
3. Nahthen Lad
4. Sunny Bay



Julian Muscat

1. NAHTHEN LAD
2. Turning Trick
3. Antonin
4. Lord Gyllene



Thunderer

1. GENERAL WOLFE
2. Avro Anson
3. Sunny Bay
4. Lo Stregone



Rob Hughes  
Chief Sports Writer

1. LORD GYLLENE
2. Smith's Band
3. Go Ballistic
4. General Wolfe



Gerald Hubbard  
Private Handicapper

1. SUNNY BAY
2. Go Ballistic
3. Antonin
4. Wyldie Hyde



At the moment the M4 is littered with roadworks, making the traffic to Heathrow even worse than before. So if you're going to Paris or Brussels, do yourself a favour and take the Eurostar from Waterloo.



Until July, before you fly you've got to crawl.

0345 303030  
or see an appointed travel agent or railway station.

Calls charged at local rate. All calls are monitored for quality.

0345 303030

Business



Rise

SHOPPING





Can good parenting really be taught?  
home life • 13

# THE TIMES weekend

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travel • 18-19



SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

Business deals on the 19th hole are old hat, but new networkers are now teeing off. **Kathryn Knight reports**



From left: Wendy Hoad, Rhona Tridgell, Karen Manley and Natalie Evans at Hanbury Manor, Hertfordshire. "I wouldn't normally get senior people to my meetings, but as soon as I began playing golf I started to fall over them"

## Rise of the iron maidens

**T**hink golf. Images of ruddy-faced executives in diamond pattern V-neck sweaters may spring to mind, networking their way round the course with an assorted bunch of like-minded businessmen on a Thursday afternoon out of the office.

Think women's golf, and you may be forgiven for picturing well-heeled housewives in pastels, snatching a golf afternoon with girl friends.

Now imagine yourself a spectator at Dukesdene golf club in

Croydon on a summer day. You may be surprised. Here, instead of housewives, you will see 50 powerful and impressive professional women from the advertising, marketing and television industries hobnobbing and networking on the fairway for all their worth.

The Laser Ladies' Golf Day, which began last year, was designed so that working women can gather to clink clubs and swap industry gossip. Professional women, it seems, have finally woken up to the career potential offered by

an afternoon discussing pears and birdies.

As a sport and hobby, golf is burgeoning in popularity. In the first half of this decade alone, 476 new courses opened, increasing the number in the British Isles by almost 30 per cent. But traditionally, like the shooting party and the gentleman's club, the businessman's golf day and its myriad networking opportunities have tended to exclude women. Indeed, women in most golf clubs are strictly second best, either banned from playing on certain

days, or limited to playing at certain hours.

At Laser, an ITV airtime sales house and part of the Granada group, Kerry Ann Klopper was tired of watching her bosses sloping off to industry golf days and hogging all the schmooze possibilities. Together with Karen Manley and other colleagues, she set up the company's first ladies golf day for any women in the same line of business who wanted both to learn to play and get to know each other in the process.

"Almost all of our management and directors are men and play golf, so they get the chance to go to golf industry days where they can meet. We wanted to see what all the fuss was about, and also we knew there is enormous potential for networking on the golf course," Kerry Ann says.

After mailing 250 women, she received an enthusiastic yes from nearly half of them in just three days. Six weeks later, 33 of them gathered at Dukesdene on a hot July day.

"I think women can have a hard time from men on the golf course, and while many of them want to get involved in these circles they are a bit frightened that they can't penetrate them," Kerry Ann says.

Some of the women were novices, some experienced golfers. Some had brought clients with them, some had brought a friend. Everyone wanted to play the chaps at their own game. "It was really very good for business, because we got women from lots of different parts of the industry together in an informal setting so we could get to know each other in a free

and unpressurised environment. We had tremendous fun, and have had lots of calls from women demanding to know when the next one is."

The new woman golfer could be a positive role model for aspiring Nineties woman. Well dressed, articulate and jolly, they are all extremely busy, the kind of people who are skiing one week and in New York for a meeting the next. It is a wonder they find the time to play golf at all. But like any

Continued on page 2

SHOPPING.....23	GARDENING.....46	PROPERTY.....7-11	FEATURES.....12	HOME LIFE.....13	COUNTRY LIFE.....14	TRAVEL.....15-23	GAMES.....25
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Much of what I was taught at school has turned out to be useless, but seldom have I found it to be wrong. The way I was taught to put together a peg bag with my initials embroidered on the outer pocket is, I am sure, as close to the correct method as it is possible to learn. Should I ever have to make a Norwegian upside-down pudding, or a Hawaiian beefburger, or a poker, or a forged historical document with its edges singed in the oven, then I am confident my technique is sound.

There is one piece of information I was given, however, that I have found to be spectacularly erroneous. It was given in a geography lesson. We were studying town planning, plotting the positions of the Central Business District (CBD — remember that?), the

OBD, the suburbs and so forth on maps. We were given a list of different sorts of shops and a blank high street — and told to sketch in where we thought the shops would be. And they say educational standards were higher 20 years ago than they are today.

"Obviously," said the teacher, with the withering scorn of which only geography and PE teachers (the latter turn into the former when their cruciate ligaments give way) are truly capable, "the butchers will not all be next to each other, they will space themselves out along the street."

Wrong. As anyone with eyes knows, next to each other is exactly where the butchers — or bakers, or department stores — will want to be. They will crawl over broken glass to site their shops next to

someone already selling precisely the same thing.

I was reminded of this lesson the other day on Tottenham Court Road in London, which proves how hugely wrong my geography teacher was. It is the mass-market electronics centre for London, for Britain, and possibly — judging by the number of Belgians and Swedes you see there carting away large oblong boxes — north-western Europe. The southern half of Tottenham Court Road — aside from one or two pornographers — only has electronics shops. In theory, Tottenham Court Road provides that rare chance for the British shopper — the chance to

## SERIOUS SHOPPING

## HAGGLING



ROBERT CRAMPTON

haggle. Hagglers are one of those foreign arts of which we, as a people, are deeply suspicious, deeply in awe and deeply ignorant. But I thought I should give it a try.

I went into the biggest shop I could see and found a man called Tony. We had a long conversation. Not far into it, Tony had convinced me without any effort that the portable CD player I wanted to buy was in fact a Sony Sports Discman with ESP. ESP does not mean the machine can see into the future or bend spoons, it means it has Electronic Shock Protection — an anti-jump device. Tony dropped it on the counter as proof. I was impressed. It cost £269 — well over twice as much as all of the others. Nonetheless, I decided I just had to have it.

Craftily, I did not tell Tony. I hummed and hahhed. I asked lots

of questions, the sort of questions I always ask when I buy something whose working parts I cannot see, do not understand, and suspect don't work. Each question was a variant of: "Please, Tony, tell me: will it break?" Tony assured me that it would not. Batteries? Yes. Guarantee? One year. From the manufacturer? Indeed.

Now we stood and looked at the machine on the counter for a long while, saying nothing. Tony began to yawn. Eventually, he said that he felt he could offer it at £242.10p. I said, right, I'll think about it. Feeling terribly sophisticated, I left. I was with three friends. We all dispersed along the Tottenham Court Road and sought the price of the same model in the other shops.

Prices varied from £269 less 10 per cent (which, one of my friends pointed out, was what Tony had offered) to £230. I was terribly excited by this.

One of my friends said I should buy the one for £230. I said no, no. There was much talk of 100 per cent mark-ups, of Tony's thirst for a commission, of entrepreneurship thriving in the spring sunshine. I went back to Tony. I've been offered this for £230 down the road, I said. He looked bored. One-year's guarantee, batteries included. Tony stifled a yawn. "Oh, right," he said. I said: "Will you sell it to me for less?" "No," he said, and I realised that not only are British shoppers embarrassed by haggling, but British shop assistants nursing bad hangovers are too.

# Making a stand for umbrellas

MAKE a splash with a distinctive umbrella stand, to instantly liven up the hallway. Just as umbrellas have become a more stylish accessory, many of these designs will make an impact come rain or shine, says Sudi Pigott

**TOP ROW** (left to right): Natural stand made from twigs wrapped with plywood bands, £47.50, from Graham & Greene, 4, 7 and 10 Elgin Crescent, W11 (0171-727 4594)

Handwoven, handpainted birch ply and dyed cane umbrella stand in bright shades of blue/yellow/pink designed by Lois Walpole, £52 plus £4.50 p&p, from Rapid Eye (0171-538 5308)

Gamekeeper in Barbour/shooting gear handpainted cut-out stand, £220, from General Trading Company, 144 Staines Street, SW1 (0171-730 0411)

Dennison Drake Designs fabric and braid covered Mary Poppins-style stand divided into six compartments with brass ball or handpainted thistle, frog, owl or bird handle, £269, from Harrods, Age of Elegance Dept, Knightsbridge, SW1 (0171-730 1234)

Blue and yellow painted china stand, £39.50, from India Jane, 131-133 King's Road, SW3 (0171-351 1060)

Elegant made-to-order leather umbrella stands (allow six to eight weeks), from £249, from Bill Amberg, 10 Chapeltown Road, W2 (0171-727 3560)

**BOTTOM ROW** (left to right): Original tall teak grain measure, from a selection around £175, from India Jane, as before

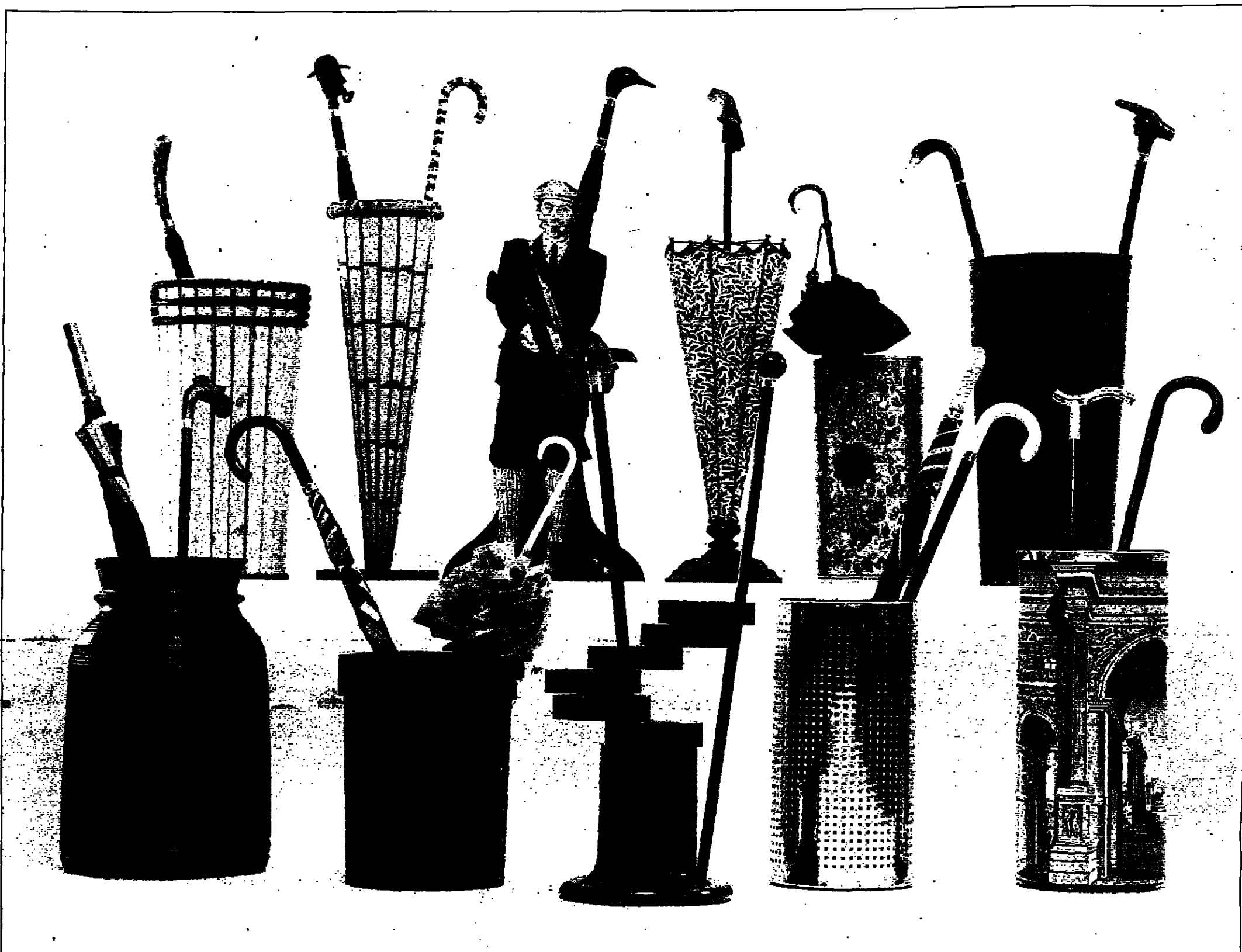
Authentic opaque blue plastic stand (available in other colours), £23, from the Conran Shop, Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, SW3 (0171-589 7491)

Original 1980s plastic swirly retro-design in red or orange, £140, from Themes & Variations, 231 Westbourne Grove, W11 (0171-727 5531)

Chrome cylinder in square-hole perforated design with removable drip saucer, £34.95, from The Source, 26-40 Kensington High Street, W8 (0171-937 2626)

Modern Fornasetti design with black and white architectural columns, £450, from Themes & Variations, as before

Photograph by Des Jensen. Styling by Caroline Griffiths. All umbrellas and walking sticks from James Smith & Son, 53 New Oxford Street, WC1 (0171-836 4731)

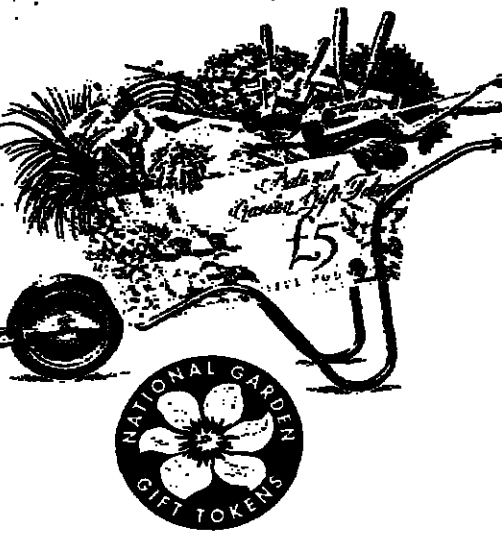


## Spring a lovely surprise

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## 'You can short-cut your way to meeting senior people'

Continued from page 1

new convert they have embraced the sport with gusto and when they do play, they make the most of it.

Rhona Tridgell, aged 39, a media and communications director for the advertising agency Foote Cone Belding, is a keen preacher of the golfing gospel and the opportunities it affords. She attends as many industry golf days with media companies, marketing and ad agencies as she can.

"You can really short-cut your way to meeting influential people," she says. "I get to meet many more senior people who normally wouldn't come to my meetings, but as soon as I began playing golf I started to fall over them."

Rhona started playing a few years ago after finding an accessible golf club that welcomed women with the same warmth as it did men. "I had been toying with taking up golf for a long time but had been a bit overawed by the male-dominated aspect. Now I can easily go to a golf day a week throughout the summer. I've made so many useful contacts," she says.

"It's nice to know that if I need to I can ring the top man in the company, or say to people you work with 'let's have a round of golf'. It's a good way of accessing people as friends and contacts."

As a fundraiser for the advertising industry's charity NABS, Rhona's sister, Helen, also finds her ability to play a few holes very useful.

"It's a new format for fundraising. I used to work in the industry itself and now I can call people I used to work with and ask myself along to their golf days, because it's good for contacts, and for fundraising it's a nice environ-

ment in which to chat up people."

For many of these networkers there is no feminist agenda, no "up and at 'em" attitude about men. They love golf and find the contacts they make often turn out to be men.

Natalie Evans, the group marketing manager for the GWR direct marketing association, says: "You don't necessarily talk business on the course but it's a great way of cementing relationships."

"Last year a guy from Texas came over to work for us. He played golf with me and then invited me over to Texas, where I met a lot of people in the radio business. We had a great time and it was good to know I'd made the contacts over there."

Nonetheless, the more hard-headed will realise how attractive the potential rewards are. John Viney, the chairman of the headhunting firm Heidrick and Struggles, knows the areas of recruitment, networking and career development intimately. Women, he believes, are contending on to advantageous networking opportunities that have previously been inaccessible.

"In the past, women have been barred from the big occasions where men got together and swapped ideas, such as the grouse shoot and the gentlemen's club," he says. "They've had to be content with social or sexual power. But women are learning to network in the same way that men have done for years. Obviously it's a slow process but it's a significant change."

Indeed, Ann Scott, who runs her own PR agency, Ann Scott Associates, regrets she didn't pursue the holy grail of business golf earlier. "When I took up golf the business side was completely incidental. I just wanted a nice way to keep fit,



## A swing to networking

JUDY JACKSON (above), a media manager for Barclaycard in London, does not play golf. Saturday afternoons often see her at a football match with work colleagues, but so far she has been unable to penetrate their golf outings. So she is taking up the sport. "It would be worth taking a few lessons, enough to wield a club without embarrassment, and have a day on the course with them," she says. "I can see the advantages of golf in business. My colleagues are male and always playing golf. They never think to ask me because it's not the sort of thing you can go along to if you're not a vaguely adequate player. I miss out because of it. The great thing about it is that it gives you time to talk. It's not like squash where you're so out of breath you can't speak. It also creates a real bond. "It's a good way to cement relationships with colleagues, for external networking and increasing your profile."

but I am completely overwhelmed by the professional impact of playing golf."

"It's a great asset to be able to play. It's a wonderful way of getting to know people better, as you're sharing a great common interest."

However at 25, Laura Job has seen the golfing light in good time. A client manager for the ad agency TMD Carat, she took a client from Nissan to the Laser day last year. "We had a laugh and it cemented our relationship in an informal environment in a way that was useful to us both. She could introduce me to potential clients and I could introduce her to other people from the agency."

Laura took her first lessons last summer and hopes that in a year or so she will be swinging her club with the best of them. "You meet such a wide variety of people at all levels, and it's nice to see them out of a suit and out of a business context. It's especially good for me because I'm

relatively young and it's nice for me to be able to mix with people much further up the hierarchy."

Over the past three years the number of women members of golf clubs has risen by 25,000 in England alone. Sports shops and department stores are reflecting this burgeoning interest.

James Wilson, the UK vice-president of sales and marketing at Kelloway Golf, the largest manufacturer of golf equipment in the world, is in no doubt. "Ten per cent of our manufacturing business in the UK is now for women, and it's growing all the time."

"Working women's golf is opening up and this is reflected in our marketing. We use more lady golfers in our advertising now."

At Marks & Spencer, the natty range of golfing wear for women shows how the winds of change have blown over the nation's courses. From next month, look out for navy, pale blue and lime.

When Wendy Hoad, who runs a golf PR business, started playing a few years ago and was often one of a small number of women on company golf days. Now, she says, there is a noticeable surge in women on the course.

"I think there has been a gradual erosion of the masculine culture that used to surround golf. It's not that men have been hostile but that women have not chosen to take part."

"Now there's a cultural shift: there's much more publicity given to women's golf generally, more ladies golf on television, and clubs are opening up," she says.

If you're left in any doubt about the relentless march of businesswomen's shoes on the

golf course, Helen Tridgell has a revealing anecdote.

"I was a guest at a grand dinner for the Solus club, a men-only club for very senior people in marketing and advertising," she recalls. "It was a mostly male occasion but at one point I was in the loos next to a highly respected businessman and found we were chatting away about our golf and how the wet and windy weather was playing havoc with our plans."

"It seemed ironic that at this very masculine dinner we were the ones having the golf conversation, in the ladies'."

## 10 WOMEN-FRIENDLY GOLF CLUBS

MANY golf clubs still treat women as second-class citizens. But those listed are among the best for fair play, either allowing women on to their committees or not restricting the times or days they may play.

- Cuxmoor, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire (01623 557359)
- Brockenhurst Manor, Brockenhurst, Hampshire (01590 623332)
- St Enodoc, Wadebridge, Cornwall (01208 863216)
- Trevejo, Padstow, Cornwall (01841 520208)
- Denham, Denham, Buckinghamshire (01895 832022)
- West Kilbride, Seamill, West Kilbride, Scotland (01284 829910)
- Wentworth, Virginia Water, Surrey (01344 842201)
- West Hill, Brookwood, Surrey (01483 474365)
- Bristol and Clifton, Clifton, Bristol (01275 393474)
- Vale of Llangollen, Llangollen, Denbighshire (0178 860906)

0171 836 4731



Conjure up images of simple glamour in two-tone combinations of stripes and swirls, says Heath Brown

# Black and white MAGIC

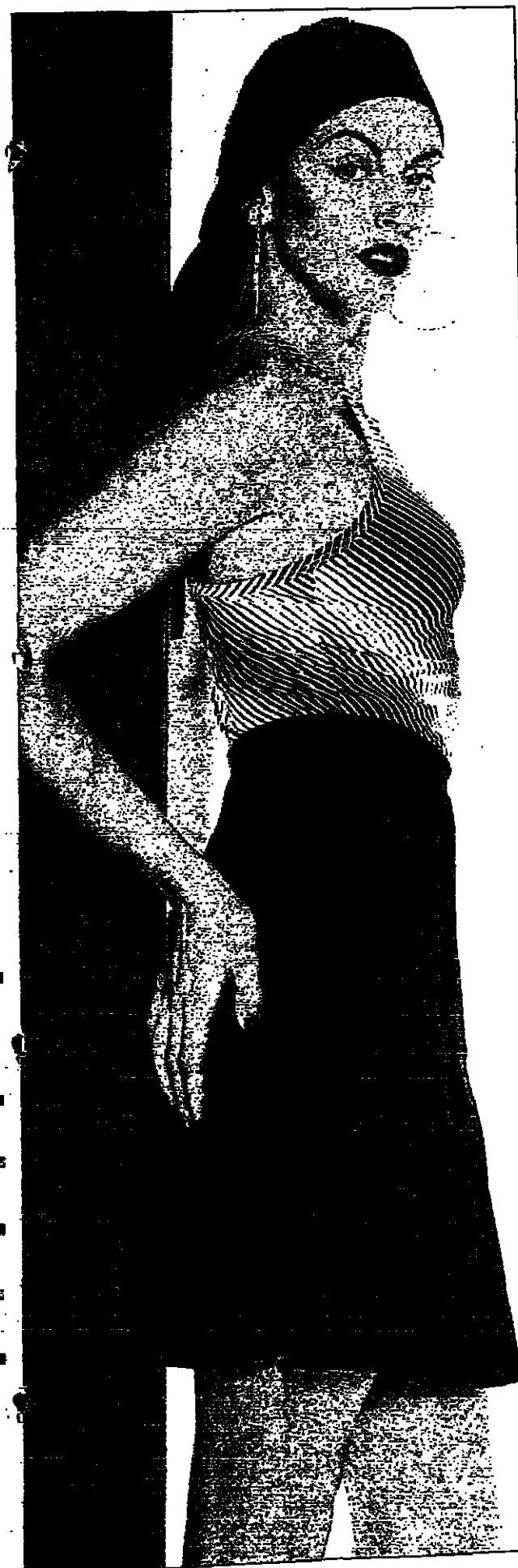
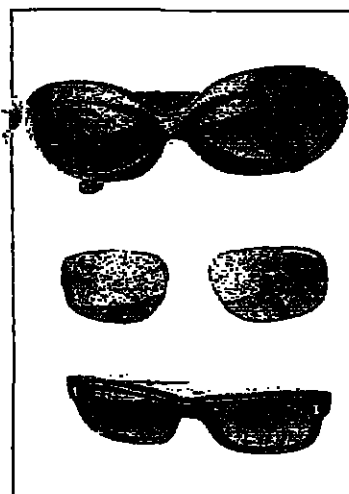
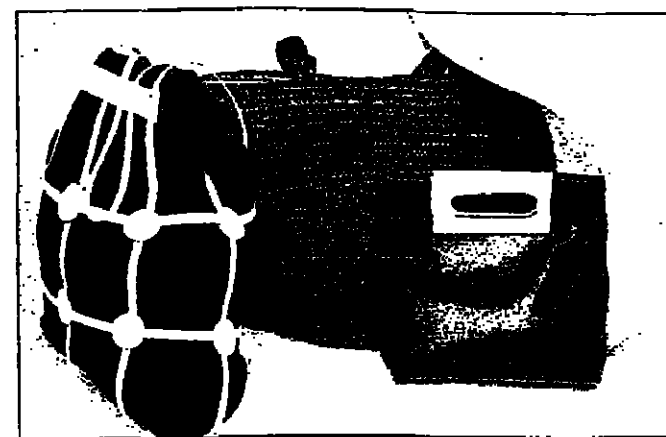
The classic combination of black with white will always be in vogue. Shades and styles go in and out of favour but monochrome remains a timeless investment. Black is flattering, disguises those extra pounds gained over the winter and makes cheaper clothes appear more expensive. But it can look a little dull worn on its own in the summer. By adding a cool, crisp, white contrast you can create a lighter, summery look. It instantly brightens up an outfit without looking garish and gives a sophisticated edge to the simplest of styles.

Try wide palazzo trousers with a simple white blouse, or strappy tops with plain skirts or dresses. Mixing the two colours is an effortless way of creating glamour and elegance. This season the ever-so-fashionable stripe looks great in black and white. Dresses with vertical "bars" are a good buy

for those who wish to appear taller, but beware of horizontal striping as it makes you look wider or an unnatural shape. The less harsh horizontal swirls and undulating stripes, however, are an exception as they divert attention away from the body.

A black and white capsule wardrobe for the holiday season can take the hassle out of packing. The essential garment to go into the suitcase must be a plain black or white swimsuit. This has been a best-seller for years and is versatile enough to be worn beneath a sheer white shirt or as a top with trousers.

Accessories are easy to find with fabulous sunglasses, two-tone bags and hair clips. Shoes come in wild zebra-print leathers, or go for sandals and mules in brilliant white or matt black. But remember not to go too far with the accessories or it can create a *My Fair Lady* costume look.



**MAIN PICTURE:** Swirl print tunic, £305; matching pants, £255, Laurel, 105 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-493 1153). Black headscarf/sarong, £12, Marks & Spencer, selected branches (0171-935 4422). Large silver hoop earrings, £22, Agatha, 4 South Molton Street, W1 (0171-495 2779).

**LEFT:** Fine stripe stretch top, £18, Warehouse, branches nationwide (0171-278 3491). Black kick-pleat skirt, £54, Jigsaw, 126-127 New Bond Street, W1 (0171-491 4484). Headscarf/sarong, Marks & Spencer, as before. Earrings, Agatha, as before.

**RIGHT:** Black jersey dress with white stripes, £135, Whistles, 12 St Christopher's Place, W1 (0171-487 4484). White floppy hat, £22, Dollargrand, Selfridges, W1 (0171-794 3028). Patent thong sandals, £27.50, Wallis, selected branches nationwide (0181-910 1333). Headscarf/sarong, as before. Earrings, as before.

Photographs by Richard Burns. Hair and make-up by Sarah Gottschack using Glauca Rossi Products (mail order, 0171-289 7485). Styling by Amandip Uppal.

**BAGS:** (from left) Black satin bag with white leather cage, £215, Marc Cain, 28 New Bond Street, W1 (0171-637 4142). Black raffia bag, £12.99, Accessorize, 0171-313 3000. Black leather bag with white handle, £44.95, Klan, Fenwick's, W1; Selfridges, W1 (0171-629 1234). (White floppy hat, £14.99, Accessorize, as before).

**SHOES:** (from left) Black leather wedge mules, £59.99, Dune, 66-68 High Street Kensington, W8 (0171-795 6336). White patent flat mules, £29.99, Rin Tin Tin, Faith, 74 Oxford Street, W1 (0800 289297). Zebra print mules, £125, Armando Pollini, 35 Brook Street, W1 (0171-629 7606). Flat strappy sandals, £20, Clarks, branches nationwide (0990 785888).

**SUNGLASSES:** (from top) Black Jackie O frame sunglasses, £119, Fendi, all leading opticians nationwide (01923 249491). White frame sunglasses, £82, Armand Basl, 14 Floral Street, WC2 (0171-278 4843). Black and white sunglasses, £98, Cutler & Gross, 16 Knightsbridge Green, SW1; Harvey Nichols, SW1 (0171-581 2250).

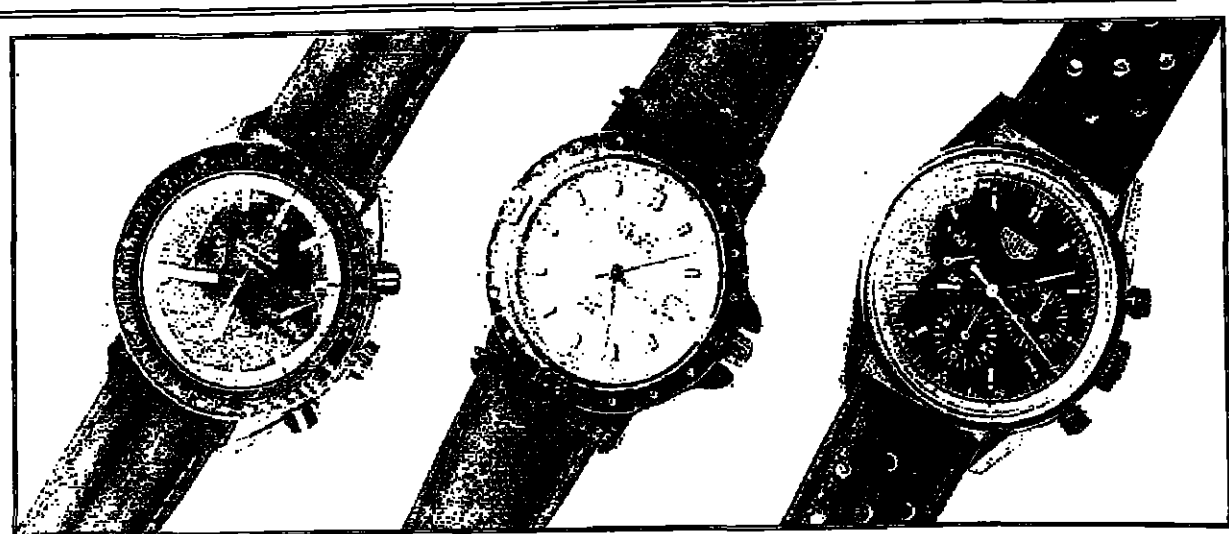
## THREE OF A KIND

A GOOD design never goes out of fashion and these three authentic, traditional men's watches are classic examples. H.B.

Red leather strap automatic Speedmaster Racing watch, £950, Omega, Mappin & Webb, 170 Regent Street, London W1; Watches Of Switzerland, 16 New Bond Street, W1 (01703 611612).

Brown leather strap automatic watch, £65.99, Next, branches nationwide (0116-284 9424).

Black punched leather strap Heuer Carrera Limited Edition watch, £1,495, Tag Heuer, Watches Of Switzerland, nationwide (01204 861163).






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COUNTRY LIFE

# Cream of Cornish gardens

■ Cotehele, St Dominick, near Saltash, Cornwall (01579 350434)

Eight miles southwest of Tavistock. Open daily, 11am-dusk. £2.80, family ticket £7

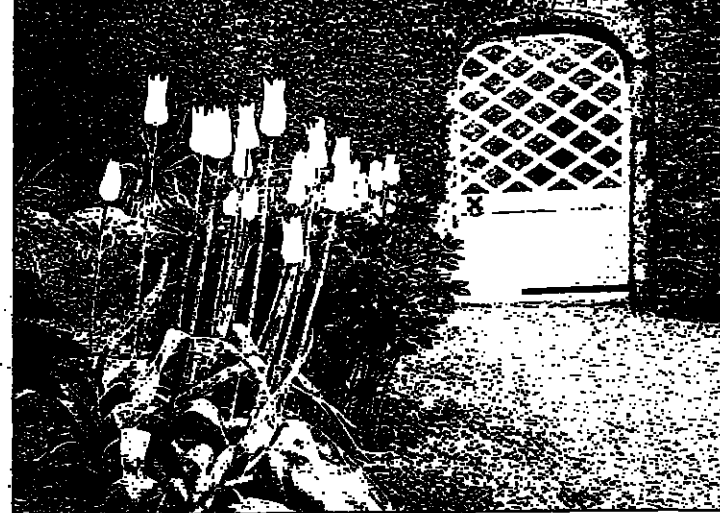
THIS magical National Trust property is nestled into the western banks of the Tamar river, which marks the boundary between Devon and Cornwall. Large herbaceous borders trace the length of each of the terraces leading down from the 15th-century manor.

As you walk down the steps running centrally through this formal area to what is apparently the final terrace overlooking a sweep of countryside, look out for a small, inconspicuous tunnel which leads under part of the garden to an informal, sheltered valley with a fish pond at its head and a grey stone, dome-shaped dovecote.

In typically fecund Cornish style the valley vegetation is huge and seemingly only just being kept under control: ferns sprout out of walls and trees, moss and lichen cling to every surface and hostas and primulas thrive. There are palms, acacia, hydrangeas and beatas, and the massive jungle-like leaves of gunnera beside the stream. You should just be in time to see the last of the magnificent magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons in flower.

There are ten acres to explore and then the paths criss-cross down to the 19th-century quay beside the Tamar. This is an ideal place to have a picnic and look over the outstation of the National Maritime Museum.

ANDREW LAWSON



Cotehele is a magical garden near the Tamar river in Cornwall

## OPEN THIS WEEKEND

■ Glenwhan Garden, Dunragit by Stranraer, Wigtownshire, Dumfries and Galloway (0181 400222)

Seven miles east of Stranraer, one mile off the A75. Open daily 10am-5pm. £2, children £1.50

THIS is regarded as one of Scotland's important gardens although it was only started in 1979 by the Knott family. When they began work the area was rigid with gorse and bracken, but it has the great advantage of the Gulf Stream to keep the climate mild and make it a virtually frost-free pocket. By

now the primula arena should be at its best, and the rhododendrons are providing colour. Since last year a lot of the vegetation has been hacked back to give new vistas across Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway, and to make a new woodland walk.

At the centre of the gardens is a large informal pool which can be traced by the rushing stream that feeds it. A causeway crosses the pool and gives a better look at the packed planting, some of it unusual, around the perimeter. The Knotts' nursery, which is attached to the gardens, is well-stocked with plants and very tempting.

JANE OWEN

■ Bampton Manor and Weald Manor Gardens, Oxfordshire (01993 850224)

On A-4055 Witney-Faringdon road. Open April 6, 2-5.30pm. £1.50 for combined ticket to see both private gardens, which open once a year for charity

WEALD MANOR is a three-acre garden with a small wood and lake. There is a mass of spring bulbs, a few fritillaries and some topiary. The owners modestly maintain that the main point of visiting the garden is for the teas, which annually raise a great deal of money for the National Gardens Scheme. Bampton Manor, a small chunk of this garden, was owned until her death 15 years ago by the gardener Peggy Munster. The bulk of the building is Georgian and it has inspired the Department of the Environment to list the brick and flint walls.

The garden opens once a year for charity at the moment when the spring garden should be at its peak, with daffodils, blue wood anemones, dwarf tulips and hyacinths. In the rest of the four acres there are cream, pink and white prunus, a mass of hellebores, crown imperials and two ponds — one a circular stone with a fountain at the centre, the other informal. Yew and stone boundaries separate one part of the garden from the next, structural work which stands as a memorial to Peggy Munster. The gardens are open by appointment at other times of year.

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## Falling prices and a strong pound are attracting British buyers to French property. Cheryl Taylor on finding the bargains



Three-bedroom stone-built house in the village of Najac, Aveyron, for sale at £63,000



This country house in the hills behind St Tropez was on sale at £1.1 million in 1994 but with the improved exchange rate recently sold for just £750,000

# Homes with a continental drift

The strength of the pound against the French franc — having gained 17 per cent in value over the past six months — and the recession in the French domestic housing market have encouraged British buyers to look again at property across the Channel.

Unlike the UK housing market, which has improved over the past two years, the French market is still in the doldrums, prices having fallen in some areas by 30-40 per cent since 1990. Agents say prices in France have now bottomed out and buyers are returning, but there is no rush to buy and purchasers are more discerning.

Paddy Dring of Knight Frank's international department, which handles properties for sale in Provence and the French Alps, says: "Until recently, the strength of the franc continued to deter British buyers, but the tables have been turned. Low prices combined with a strong pound have suddenly made French property an attractive and affordable proposition."

There have been dramatic price reductions in Provence, although property here is still "over-ripe". Knight Frank has recently sold a palatial country house with 7.5 acres in the hills behind St Tropez. When it came on the market in 1994 at £9 million, it would have cost £1.1 million. The price was reduced to £6.5 million last summer, but at the time was worth £860,000. Now, with the improved exchange rate, it is £750,000 — a drop of more than a third.

There are bargains too in the Dordogne, where there are now so many Britons with second homes that the French call it "Little England". A restored five-bedroom house, with an attached holiday cottage, barn, garage and walled garden, in a village in the northeast of the Dordogne was on the books of the French Property Shop a year ago at £1 million, then costing £133,000. Now it is priced at £750,000, about £81,000.

In the south of France, British purchasers priced out of Provence are moving westwards to Languedoc Roussillon in search of better value. The area around Perpignan is the poor man's riviera, with a Mediterranean coastline and a rash of new resorts aimed at low-budget French tourists. However, its rugged hinterland is scattered with pretty hilltop villages and some lovely old houses for less than £50,000.

The weather is hot and dry in summer and property prices are much cheaper than on the Côte d'Azur. A habitable two-bedroom cottage in hilltop village, near Prades, a 45-minute drive from the sea, costs about £35,000. A four-bedroom stone-built farmhouse in good condition, with fine views and a swimming pool, will fetch about £120,000.

There is growing interest too in the Auvergne Valley, the southernmost part of Languedoc, inland from Narbonne, with its famous vineyards, feudal castles and fortified cities. Rustic properties are now in short supply, but you might find an

old stone house from £50,000. But avoid homes without water and electricity; installation of essential services can cost a fortune here.

Nigel Paige of Authentic France reports a brisk trade in village houses further east in the Hérault, around Pézenas, a 30-minute drive from the sea. Clustered around a square, a church and a boules pitch, houses cost about £25,000 for anything that is habitable. They usually lack any type of garden, but often have beautiful views from upper terraces. A six-bedroom *maison viticoleur* (winegrower's house) can be bought for £50,000 to £100,000.

Many Britons are looking to settle permanently in France, often with a view to retirement, particularly in the southwest, where the houses are bigger, the weather is warmer and property more reasonably priced.

According to Sarah Francis, specialist in French property for Sifex, leisure is an increasingly important factor for many British buyers. Well-located properties in areas such as the Gers, the Lot, the Lot et Garonne, the Aveyron and the Tarn, within a two-hour drive of the Atlantic coast and winter skiing in the Pyrenees, are sought after and harder to find, she says.

South of the Dordogne, the Lot is hotter and drier, with a more arid landscape and a number of modest rural dwellings priced from £50,000. An old village house for modernisation in one of the medi-

eval hilltop villages would cost from £50,000; the restored version from £80,000.

A huge white-stone farmhouse for conversion, with enough land to graze a few horses, can be found for £70,000 near Cahors, an area famous for its full-bodied red wines. Converted and modernised, these fetch from £130,000 with a swimming pool.

Prices slip further east in the Lot et Garonne, where a restored five-bedroom house in a village near Montaigne de Quercy is on offer at £57,000 through the French Property Shop.

South of the Lot, the sunflower-filled *département* of the Tarn, between the Massif Central and the Pyrenees, is off the tourist track and prices are low. Stone-built cottages,

farmbuildings and village houses around Gaillac or Albi, about a 45-minute drive from Toulouse, can be found for a fraction of the price of those in Provence.

The stock of rural dwellings has diminished as more buyers move to the Tarn in search of better value, but you can still pick up a small village house from £30,000. For £50,000 you can buy a habitable three-bedroom cottage with a garden. A restored country house, with up to five bedrooms and land around, costs about £150,000.

The Aveyron is a sparsely populated mountainous *département* on the edge of the southwest, about a two-hour drive from Toulouse airport, or ten hours from Calais. Situated between the Lot and the Tarn, it is green and fertile, crisscrossed by rivers and full of lakes. It has an historic capital in Rodez, ancient walled towns and villages, dramatic gorges and the limestone caves where Roquefort cheese is ripened.

Despite its many attractions, the Aveyron tends to be ignored by British property buyers and prices are low. There is a good range of property from stone cottages and farmbuildings to large country houses with outbuildings and sizeable acreages.

You can buy a large stone farmhouse with a rambling old barn and a well, but without mains water or electricity, from £25,000. Restored with converted outbuildings and a swimming pool, the same property might fetch £80,000. A renovated two or three-bedroom

village house, with a garden, costs about £40,000.

Further west, the Gers, close to the foothills of the Pyrenees and famous for its foie gras and fiery Armagnac brandy, continues to attract British buyers in search of large Gascon-style country houses, stone-built with wooden shutters, in good condition for under £120,000.

Now there is renewed interest in the Pas de Calais, particularly the area south of Boulogne, which has a rolling green landscape scattered with picturesque river valleys and some delightful wooded areas.

You could find a number of pretty villages and some interesting old towns, including Hesdin, Samer and the walled city of Montreuil-sur-Mer, with its cobble streets and medieval ramparts. This was the boom area of the late 1980s; conveniently placed for a quick hop to France, the area seemed ideal for a weekend retreat and many British buyers paid over-the-odds for tumbledown properties which cost too much to restore. Property prices, which slumped following the recession in the UK, have been slow to recover.

Maggie Kelly of the English-owned estate agency L'Abritanque, based in Hesdin, reports increased interest from British buyers: "With return ferry crossings from only £17, an improved exchange rate and low property prices, the Pas de Calais is

enjoying a revival. These days, however, buyers are reluctant to take on ruins, preferring something ready to move into," she says.

On the books of L'Abritanque, near Montreuil-sur-Mer, is a detached 19th-century house in pristine condition, with three bedrooms, large restored barn and a garden, a 45-minute drive from the Channel Tunnel terminus, on offer at £70,000. There is also a renovated two-up-two down character cottage at £30,000.

Prices in the Pays Dange region in classic Normandy countryside beyond Rouen and south of Lisieux to Alençon have fallen 25 per cent since 1990, says Vivienne Bridge of North and West France Properties.

A traditional half-timbered farmhouse in good condition, with four bedrooms and an acre of land, will set you back about £110,000. About £250,000 buys a small château with up to five acres.

Prices drop south and west in the Orne region of lower Normandy, about a 90-minute drive from the ferry port of Caen (Ouistreham), where you can still find a habitable two-bedroom village house with a garden for £25,000, or a restored three-bedroom farmhouse for £40,000.

It is important to take independent legal advice when buying or selling property in France. Any money in the form of a deposit or sale proceeds should be paid to the *notaire* in France or, in the case of a sterling transaction, to an English solicitor, in a client account held as stakeholder.

### GOING FRENCH

■ British-based solicitors who specialise in French conveyancing: Anthony Wilkin of Thrings & Long, Bath 01225 448494; Stephen Smith of Prestys, Ipswich 01473 232121; Sally Osborne of Russell-Cooke, Potter and Chapman, London 0181-789 9111.

■ Agents: Authentic France, 01288 821372; North and West France Properties, 0171-386 9826; Knight Frank, 0171-429 8171; French Property Shop, 01892 552449; Siles 0171-384 1200; L'Abritanque, Hesdin, 00 33 321 815 979; Propriétés Roussillon, 0129 459 9058.

## Paris by numbers

When buying in the capital make sure you choose the right postcode

With Paris just three hours from London by Eurostar, more British buyers are taking advantage of the strong pound to buy or rent a pied-à-terre in the French capital, where architectural gems can be found around every corner, and the Parisians cluster together in huge apartment blocks of varying elegance and dilapidation. Because the majority of homes in Paris are privately rented, investors in particular are keen to seek out properties to buy and subsequently rent out.

Although the property market in Paris has been in decline for the past six years, with prices having slumped 30 per cent, as elsewhere in France, Leonard Weil, a Parisian buying agent for Hamptons in the UK, reports that the market is picking up.

Naturally the price of a flat depends on its location, size and condition. Prices are worked out according to the number of square metres and the price per square metre for the area, ranging from about £15,000 (£1,670) per square metre to £40,000 (£4,460) for a top-notch flat.

Annual rental values for a good quality flat range between £1,000 (£110) per square metre and £1,200 (£135) per square metre. Hence a smart two-bedroom flat in a restored period building in the centre of Paris will cost around £8,000 (£890) a month for 100 square metres, while a studio

suitable for a pied-à-terre will range from £4,000 (£445) a month for 30 square metres.

Descriptions of French properties specify the number of rooms in the living area, rather than indicating how many bedrooms, so a two-bedroom apartment will be referred to as *trois pièces*, plus kitchen and bathroom.

Paris is divided into 20 *arrondissements*, each with more of a distinctive flavour than a London postcode. Parisians tend to refer to a flat in the 6th or 7th (the Left Bank, near the Eiffel Tower), or the 8th (the Right Bank near the Champs Elysées) with no other explanation necessary.

The 16th, on the Right Bank, in the west of the city near the Bois de Boulogne, is a fashionable area, with its wide tree-lined avenues of 19th-century belle époque buildings.

A two-bedroom flat — *trois pièces* — plus kitchen and bath in an imposing *hôtel particulier* (town house) in the Avenue Foch, built in grand style, with high-ceilinged rooms and French windows, will cost at least £300,000.

Le Bastille, the up-and-coming 11th *arrondissement* on the Right Bank, is the Parisian equivalent of Islington, where you can pick up an apartment in an old character building from £150,000 for 70 square metres. Similarly, Le Marais, an old aristocratic quarter of the 3rd and 4th, is enjoying a renaissance. Its renovated 17th



Town house near the Trocadero, Paris on sale at £2.5 million

and 18th-century mansions are being converted into trendy apartments for artists and media folk, who pay anything from £180,000 for a two-bedroom flat.

On the Left Bank, a flat in the centre of town, in the 5th, 6th and 7th, in less salubrious Pigalle in the 18th will cost at least £80,000 for anything that is habitable.

Most Parisians want to live at second-floor level for a better view, more light and less noise, ideally, *entre cour*

et jardin — overlooking a courtyard and a garden. You might get a better deal on a ground-floor flat or at the top of building without a lift.

As far as condition goes, elegant staircases, marble fireplaces and ornate ceilings are all very fine, but bathroom-sized bedrooms can cost a fortune to heat, and French plumbing and wiring can leave a lot to be desired. To avoid the massive rush-hour traffic jams, make sure there is a Metro station nearby.

The leasehold system does not exist in France, where all property, including flats, are owned freehold. Flat owners are jointly responsible for the common parts of the building and decisions about maintenance and repairs are taken collectively by the residents. If you are planning to buy a flat it is important to check your share of these maintenance costs before you sign the

compromis de vente (sale contract).

Paris-based agents Phillip and Patricia Hawkes operate at the top end of the market — properties worth more than £300,000. Leonard Weil, who operates a buyer's service for Hamptons clients spending more than £160,000, will search for the Parisian property of your dreams, and negotiate on your behalf. His fees are included in the asking price. Buyers pay 9 per cent of the purchase price for notary fees and taxes.

Houses with gardens are rare in the city centre and change hands for fortunes — at least £2 million. Those who wish to own a home of their own, with a garden, usually move out to the leafy suburbs around Neuilly, Maisons La-fite and Versailles, where property prices are more reasonable. Something old and interesting in such sought-after areas will still be about 15 to 20 per cent less than central Paris.

About 13 miles south of Paris, a 17th-century *pavillon* with a contemporary outbuilding, orangery and guardian lodge, in 12 acres of walled formal gardens, is on offer at £333,000. It comes with nine bedrooms, five bathrooms, period panelling, original fireplaces and a wine cellar. A hypermarket next door is a drawback, Ms Hawkes says, but it is a lot of house for the money.

There are many small firms of estate agents in Paris but, because most owners who wish to sell advertise the property themselves, prospective buyers should study the small ads in the French daily newspaper *Figaro* and specialist magazines, such as *Particuliers*.

C.T.

■ Hamptons, 0171-824 8822; Phillip and Patricia Hawkes 00 33 142 681 111; Leonard Weil 00 33 140 581 135.

## Renovation the French way

RENOVATING a house is a gruelling business, but renovating a house in a foreign language is even harder. It is one thing to realise that the builders have put the lavatory where the washing machine is supposed to be, but quite another to explain the problem in a language that you stopped learning when you were 15.

A few years ago, we fell in love with a three-bedroom wreck in Burgundy. It had not been lived in for a few years, and it needed a complete renovation. Undeterred, we bought it within a week. What followed was not so much a catalogue of disasters, but a series of mishaps that will be of great benefit to those treading the same path.

Our first mistake was to employ an English plumber, whose wife had introduced us to the house. I first visited the house a year after we had bought it, and I was presented with water gushing from pipe joints, a gaping hole where a sink had been casually ripped out, and the bathrooms were more basic than those used by a desert tribe. The plumber had returned to Britain, so there was little we could do. The electricians which were installed by a friend of the plumber, felt — almost literally — ropey.

With a van load of furniture arriving in three weeks, we turned to the locals. They were extremely helpful. The previous owner gave us a pamphlet that listed all the local tradesmen. After seeking various quotes, we employed the local builders (Entreprise Générale de Bâtiment) who called on specialists needed to plaster, tile, shore up, rewire and replumb.

The co-operation between the tradesmen was unlike anything I had witnessed in Britain. At the beginning, they all met in the

house for a "council of war", which I would thoroughly recommend. We discussed each room in great detail and, after plans had been finalised, the work went smoothly.

The problem was language. Before every meeting, I would rehearse. Conversation classes are one thing, but the French words for "reinforced steel joists" and "thump spoke" are not normally banded. The catalogues issued by two large French DIY chains — Obi and Castorama — were invaluable. These, with a lexicon of building terms found in the Continental Bookshop in London, got me through.

Although the work has not yet been finished, we can now enjoy our house. The work carried out has been excellent and the prices fair. Most British have the suspicion that French builders are even more on the make than their equivalents back home, but this was not the case for us.

TO THOSE intending to undertake a similar renovation, I would also recommend opening a bank account as soon as possible. French tradesmen do not wish to be paid in traveller's cheques or a fist full of £50 notes. A French bank account is also useful for establishing direct debits (*les prélèvements automatiques*) to pay the bills of the utility companies.

Incidentally, paying for electricity is different in France. There, you nominate the number of kilowatts you wish to use (*puissance mise à votre disposition*) and you are levied on that amount. There are also special tariffs, which are useful for those who only use the house in summer.

KERRY BROOKER

### Checklist of useful builder's vocabulary

ENGLISH	FRENCH	ENGLISH	FRENCH
estimate	le devis	main sewerage	le tout-à-l'égout
wiring system	l'électricité	attic conversion	l'aménagement du grenier
central heating	le chauffage central	carpenter	le menuisier
(electrical) socket	la prise	builder's merchant	le marchand de matériaux
water supply	l'alimentation en eau	partition wall	la cloison
plumbing	la plomberie	builder	le maçon
drainage	l'évacuation des eaux usées	roof check and repairs	l'entretien et les réparations du toit
septic tank	la fosse septique		





The colonial-style front of Whitton Place, complete with flagpole and Union Jack, plus a four-car garage

# In the hall of the gizmo king

Cranky but comfortable or terrifyingly tacky? The answer is in the eye of the buyer

Driving to Whitton Place on a blustery night, as Owl in *Winnie The Pooh* might have said, the air rich and moist with a Brighton sea fret that had somehow managed to sneak over the border into Hove. I couldn't make up my mind whether the house was weird or wonderful.

I had studied the estate agent's brochure and done my homework. I knew they wanted £1 million to £1.5 million for what, to my mind at any rate, looked like a jumped-up house in the suburbs, albeit with koi carp and cupolas. Even so, I was pretty certain of the tack. I was going to take the tacky tack. And my first glimpse of the place didn't do anything to change my mind. With its flagpole, Union Jack snapping like washing on a clothes line, Corinthian columns and topiary like a standard poodle's bottom flanking the front door, the house looked like somebody's idea of a bizarre joke (what do you get when you cross the White House with a Barratt Home?).

Crunching up the gravel, I had the feeling I was being watched. At first I suspected it was King Trident, whose lifelike sculpture dangled from the front wall flanked



The 50ft pool has its own bar and changing room with sauna. The drawing room, right, has casements opening on to the koi pool

by two giant clams holding hardy annuals. Then I realised it was the security cameras, zooming in on my every move, which were making my neck hairs stand on end.

Derek Edmonds, the retired owner in his late forties, is known in the area for having been a jeweller and pawnbroker in Brighton. He showed me around the house which has been his home for nearly 18 years and seemed almost as keenly aware of the strange character of the place.

Standing in the middle of his smoked salmon-pink master bedroom, he demonstrated how, at the push of a button, a jet of water shoots out of the bottom of the chandelier on to whoever happens to be loitering in the enormous round tub below. "I was telling someone about this and as I was doing so I

realised it sounded terrible. Terrible! But it's not, really."

And, he is right. Because although Whitton Place is hardly a shrine to good taste, it is indeed what Mr Edmonds insists it is: a house for living in. A house that is fun. A house for those who crave creature comforts, and lots of them.

There are gadgets and gizmos everywhere. In the peach bedroom, for instance, you can lie on the bed and use a sort of Mission Control panel to do everything from summon tea (delivered by the gentleman's gentleman, George) to draw the curtains or run the bath. "The water has been pre-set to come out at just the right temperature, the plug goes down automatically, and when the bath gets to the desired level, the water turns itself off." When the water does come out, it



spews from the beaks of swan-head taps. Does he ever, I wonder, forget which control button to push and wind up running the bath when he really means to open the safe? Or summon George when he really only fancies a bit of *EastEnders*? And there's more. Go through the enormous en suite dressing room, the clothes folded immaculately in stacks which, one suspects, bear the loving mark of George, and at the end, hidden away behind what looks like just another wall, is a sauna. "Just a little one, of course: there's a bigger one downstairs."

At the other end of the suite is the fitness room. "If I used this thing every day, I'd lose 20lb," Mr Edmonds says of a white-padded contraption which, at the touch of yet another button, starts thrashing about wildly.

Downstairs, in the living room, the centre of the floor revolves. "That was from my crazy younger days," Mr Edmonds admits. "We had a round sofa and you could sit on it and spin around so you could have a cuddle by the fire spin around so you could have a view of the garden; just spin around for the hell of it if you liked." While spinning you could gaze up into the Carolina-blue cupola, with its fluffy white clouds.

One of the peculiarities, structurally, of the house is its three staircases. "The previous owner had a thing about *Fiddler on the Roof* and the song about a house with three stairways," Mr Edmonds says. The main staircase is wide, and sweeping down it I feel

rather like a malnourished Mae West making an entrance. The grounds, like the house, hide myriad secrets, tasteful and otherwise. There are little benches, a metalwork elephant, statues of mysterious-looking Chinese men, a hard tennis court ("Don't forget to mention the tennis court", and a cherry tree which, in summer, at precisely 7pm, a flock of red and green parrots comes to visit. "Don't ask me where they come from."

Alongside the house is an enormous koi pool, filled with carp the size of grouper. "We had a koi cull recently; we had to fish out about 500 of the smaller ones and give them to friends."

The fish thrive thanks to filtration and pumping system hidden under a "rockery". "Oh, it's not real. It's like Disneyland, really."



Selling up: Derek Edmonds

## HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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Water spews forth from swan-head taps in the bathroom

Mr Edmonds says, gesturing to the rocks. There are more surprises: a 50ft heated swimming pool shaped rather like a kidney bean; a pair of patris, even better than the ones at his house in Spain; a conservatory where, on reckless summer evenings, one can summon the bartender to dish up the Martinis while above, in the gallery, the gentlemen play cards.

All of this five minutes from the centre of Brighton, 20 minutes from Gatwick, an hour from London. So why is he leaving this utopia with topiary? "It's just too big. I suddenly felt it was obscene really, two people living in such an enormous house. But I shall miss it."

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### How to Enter

Anyone may enter the competition simply by sending in *one* original poem, any subject, any style, to:

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The poem should be no more than 20 lines, and the poet's name and address must appear at the top of the page. The entry must be typed or neatly handwritten and will not be returned. All poets who enter will receive a reply, along with complete competition rules, within nine weeks.



*The Coming of Dawn, featured above, is one of the Library's recent deluxe hardbound anthologies.*

### Publication Opportunity

All of the poems entered into the competition will also be considered for inclusion in one of The International Library of Poetry's forthcoming anthologies. Every poem remains the exclusive property of its author. Anthologies published by the organisation have included *A Passage in Time*, *Voices on the Wind*, *The Other Side of the Mirror*, *Between a Laugh and a Tear* and *The Coming of Dawn*, among others.

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'We fed the ducks, watched the boys kicking a ball around... and I suddenly thought that I could have lived a completely other life'

## The working woman's lament

LIFE AND SOUL



GINNY DOUGARY

I started happening a few weeks ago, and always in precisely the same way. I'm walking across the common, taking a break from work, blithely minding my own business, when it strikes. The first time, which hurt the most, I had hoped was a random attack. But now, I can see that there is a pattern. A small boy is accompanied by someone who is obviously his nanny. The nannies are always sweet and loving and very young, and the child always looks supremely contented.

I must have witnessed this sort of scene hundreds of times since I've been a mother, but it has never made an impression before. Having worked since my first son was three months old, it has always looked entirely normal. But recently, for some reason, at the sight of a lanky little boy gabbling away to someone who is not his mother, running into her arms or playing hide-and-seek behind an avenue of trees, I am shot through with sadness. More peculiar and uninvited still, it suddenly looks wrong. The question is "Why?" and

"Why now?" This is not one of those "feminist recants" confessions, which are a particular delight to the forces which are so eager to turn back the clock and transform us into cake-baking apron-wearers from Stepford.

But I do think that in one's reluctance to give any ground to the "woman's place" in the home brigade, it has felt safer to deny the obvious. Which is, that for every mother who has young children and works full-time there are moments when she feels torn or guilty or regretful.

For years, I have sought to deny or repress this. Since most women are obliged to work — either as the major breadwinner or the sole earner or, simply, to help pay the bills — there is not a lot of choice about it. And since I am privileged enough to be able to earn my living from home, it has felt more comfortable, and certainly kinder, not to

explore the downside of working motherhood with friends who have to go to an office every day.

Actually, I have to say that nearly all my female friends who have children have pushed or are pushing to work part-time or to spend part of their working week at home. It should be the case that the more senior you become, the more confidence you have to mould your working week to suit yourself. While your colleagues might prefer to have a long and bibulous midday break than to leave the office at six, you should be able

to skip lunch and get home for bedtime. But office culture rarely works like this. If you want to be a player, you must play by the rules, not invent your own.

My friends divide rather evenly into the high-powered and reasonably affluent self-employed, and the low-powered and often skint self-employed. Both camps can work flexible hours and tailor their work to suit their lives. In theory, they should be able to see as much, or as little, of their children as they like. In practice, it rarely works out this way. Most of us, who are fortunate

enough to have work, are wage-slaves to some extent — which means that we are often fagged out and irritable when we come to play with our children.

I remember keenly a former colleague telling me that she was so accustomed to handing her children over to her nanny, or sharing the parenting responsibility with her husband at weekends, that the thought of having sole charge of them really alarmed her.

Last half-term, for the first time in ages, we had no childcare. I had no work. Of course, there have been times in the past ten years when I've looked after the boys on my own. But to spend a whole week with them, just my sons and me, was something of a novelty.

On one of the days, we had a picnic on the common with another mother and

her sons. It was a rare, early spring day when the sun shines full beam and everyone looks happy. We fed the ducks, watched the boys kicking a football around and talked idly about this and that. There was a great sense of female camaraderie, as other mothers we knew and their offspring stopped by to chat or steal a sandwich. It was such easy and uncomplicated pleasure, and I was suddenly struck by the thought that I could have lived a completely other life. A life which I had never really considered that I was equipped to enjoy, and now it was too late.

There is no way round this problem. I don't feel that I was born to be a hausfrau, but neither does it seem quite right that I have missed out on so much of my sons' childhood. The overpowering sense of regret I feel, when I see those little boys with their nannies, however, is not to do with my sons growing up so rapidly — but with the fact that, at 40, I am unlikely to find out if I would have been happier if I'd done things differently.

## Help for the mother of all tantrums

Can good parenting be taught? A sceptical Jill Parkin squeezed onto a new course to find out

There is a great British supermarket tradition which goes something like this: Harassed mother: "Do you want a smack?" Naughty child: "No. Hate you!" Smack! Waaah! Other shoppers (further their breath): "What a terrible mother."

As many mothers think several times a day, there must be a better way. You may not be a supermarket smacker, but you may be a shouter or just frustrated and stressed by the daily battle of wills. Can parenting be taught?

Parenting courses are catching on. And you wouldn't believe the problems some people have. Or maybe, if you're a parent, you would. I went along to a session at a health centre in Maidenhead.

One mother said: "There was a time he would only sit in his toy car. Then it was only in bed. Now it's only outside. And a ritual has developed — I have to sit on a tree stump while he eats. Thank goodness it's spring."

I've never gone in for group therapy before and had the idea we would sit round chatting for a couple of hours. All very cosy but not much good when the tree stump is four inches deep in snow.

Stories were swapped. Me: no noises were made about temper tantrums (ours, not the children's). But there's more than that to this seven-week plot course, which is run by East Berkshire Community Health NHS Trust.

Rachel McHugh, the health visitor who was leading the session and had just been role-playing on the carpet with her colleague, Angela Baldwin, said: "There is a framework. The course does move you on." Rachel was the naughty child throwing her toys around the floor and Angela was by turns the supermarket mother and the successful, post-parenting

course mother. Each session takes a situation, gives examples of right and wrong ways to handle it, and asks you what you're going to do to improve things. This session was about how to talk to your child.

The general idea is that you don't say: "I don't believe this! You've made a mess again. Tidy it up now. Daddy will be so cross when he hears." You use what the experts call an "I" message. Something like: "I spent a long time tidying up this room. Let's do it again, then it will look nice and Daddy will be pleased to hear you've been good." Apparently "I" messages are used a lot in assertiveness training.

Buzz phrases abounded. "I" messages, something called "noticing behaviour", "shaming" and "blaming" — I never knew I was doing so much between the breakfast porridge and the bedtime story. But perhaps that's because I'm not being "respectful" (another parenting buzz word) enough to my three under-fives.

Parenting itself is a hot topic. Making parents responsible for their children's behaviour is the latest idea from the politicians and there are bound to be more as we approach May 1.

East Berkshire Community Health NHS Trust believes it is the first statutory body to offer courses. At just £10 a head, they're within most people's reach. According to the trust, national research shows that 60 per cent of parents would like to attend a course.

Two of the women who finished the East Berkshire course were full of praise for it. Lorna Stewart, an accountant and now a full-time mother of one-year-old Andrew, and Matthew, two and a half, was fed up with getting cross.

"I was finding it a bit difficult with the older one



Max Ring (left) and Matthew Stewart with their mothers Lorna Stewart, with baby Andrew, and Jane Ring after their parenting course

who was challenging my authority. He played up when I was changing nappies or breastfeeding the younger one. I was shouting and getting annoyed. I thought, 'there must be better way to deal with this'.

"The course is much more flexible than reading a book, because you feed off each other. I don't have a local network of family and friends at home with children. I can't walk down the street and see six other mothers and children. And the older generation can give you outdated information. I think they relied on smacking or being really hard on their children." Lorna is grateful to have learnt to

ignore bad behaviour (unless it's dangerous) and encourage good. "If Matthew throws his Lego into the air now I don't rush in to tell him off. If he's playing quietly with it, I go in and chat about what a good tower he's making, rather than just seeing it as a chance to go and get on with the washing. That way he gets my attention for being good."

Jane Ring gave up her job in the marketing department of a computer firm to be at home full-time with her son Max, who's now three. She has no partner. She says: "You're never really sure if you're doing it right. I have no one to discuss it with. In my

house, what I say is right. When Max was two going on three, he turned into a monster, always challenging my authority."

"It's very easy to get carried away in the day-to-day running of life. The course taught me to take more notice of him. I thought: 'I must slow down and give him more time.' He is a person, and the course raised my awareness of that. I wasn't giving him enough respect."

"I learnt to avoid confrontation by giving him choices — limited choices — about what he'd like to do. On the course everyone opened up and I was surprised to discover that everyone shouts at their kids."

My only criticism was that it could have been broadened to take account of single parents.

The talk in our session was free and easy. Relationship problems got an airing as well. "The night without TV went well," one woman said. "We talked and we read. It was good." After all if the men won't come onto the course —

and they haven't appeared yet — they can expect to be talked about.

Each generation has its own ideas about bringing up children. One woman was bitter about her mother's advice on her second child. "She kept saying: 'Don't keep picking that baby up. You'll spoil him.' And 'If I had him he'd be a different child.' I felt out of

control. I was labelling him a problem. My health visitor suggested coming here. I had felt trapped into bringing him up the way my mother wanted. Now I've sorted out what's important and what isn't. And I know that cuddling him isn't going to spoil him."

Parenting courses need to sort out their image. The worst sort of parent is unlikely to enrol but some people think that only bad parents need a course. Judging by my sample, we could all learn something.

The session I attended was a fairly middle-class affair and consisted of seven mothers and two health visitors. We began — you just have to take a deep breath and get on with it — by telling the group one thing we'd like our children to learn from us. Most of us said kindness. I didn't, but then I'm an old hack.

At the end of the session Rachel turned out the lights for our relaxation period, and asked us to close our eyes and imagine holding our youngest child. I expected to feel a total lemon, but found myself smiling down at my absent baby instead.

It's easy to knock the whole idea, of course. The British don't feel at ease with self-conscious self-improvement. Especially if it involves relaxation and role-play. But I decided to try the "I" message with my elder daughter, who usually goes deaf every morning when told — in ever shriller maternal tones — to get dressed for school.

Now I say to her: "I'd like you to get dressed. I want us to be on time for school." And she does it. I may have been saved from the tree stump.

● Information on the East Berkshire course: 01753 638423. Parent Network is a national charity which runs parenting courses around the country. They cost around £100. For details of your local courses ring 0171-455 8535 for England and Wales and 0131-332 0893 for Scotland.

Ruth Gledhill meets a riotous rector with cause to confess: 'All vicars are failed actors'

## A pun-filled Easter message



UNUSUALLY for a church service, the congregation was laughing. A succession of Christmas-cracker style jokes made me wonder whether the youthful rector had missed his true vocation in pantomime. "All vicars are failed actors," he confessed later.

The children had been called to the front and sat at his feet on the chancel steps. "Where is Jesus today?" he asked them. "Behind you," replied one of the boys, pointing at the cross on the altar. The rector jumped, and looked a little taken aback. "In the sky," another child suggested. "At the right hand of God," a third said.

Eggs, the rector suggested, could be related to anything. He invited the children to challenge him. "Chocolate," one said. "Eggsellent," he replied. "Homework?" said another. "Eggs-cruciating."

The witticisms continued. "Who was the second person who took the body of Jesus down from the Cross?" the rector asked. That had them stumped. "I'll give you a clue: he was the first Irishman in the Bible." We remained baffled. "Nicodemus," he said, and we tilted.



Jocular: the Rev Adrian Newman

this church was not in London but in Chatwin's home town, Birmingham. We were welcomed by the peal of 16 bells, the first of its kind in the country, but even when there were only half that number the bells of St Martin's were used to drown out of John Wesley as he preached in the Bull Ring outside the church in 1745. In the 13th century, a smaller church stood on this spot, near the castle of the de Bermingham family, granted a charter for a market by the king. Church and market flourish, though the castle has long gone, replaced by underpasses, flyovers, offices and the bleakest of modern shopping centres. Easter has seen further, predictable challenges to the

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SERMON: The rector acted out the story of Simon, an early church "village idiot" — using an Eddie Grundy accent. ★★★★★

MUSIC: The mixed choir sang a folk-style anthem. ★★★★★

LITURGY: A new version, relaxed but powerful. ★★★★★

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AFTER-SERVICE CARE: Coffee and tea. ★★★★★

truth of Christianity, but future generations will surely find the message of the church more credible than the devastation wreaked on Birmingham city centre this century. The children were sent off to "junior church" and we listened to a woman read from Luke's gospel. On each side, women stood holding candles. We heard how women visited the tomb of Christ and found it empty, apart from dazzling angels, but their report was not believed. The rector preached on how to recognise the risen Jesus. "For some people it can be through preaching," he said. "For many others it is in the Eucharist, in sharing the bread and the wine."

St Martin's, named after the popular 4th-century Gallic saint who gave half his cloak to a beggar, has recently suffered a mass exodus of its staff. The Rev Adrian Newman, aged 38, arrived only six months ago. Two curates are expected to arrive in the summer, but Mr Newman is still seeking a music director and an associate rector. Standing steady in the wings, keeping things ticking over during this period of change, were two blades, as the vergers are known at St Martin's.

We prayed for those in hospital, prison, the unemployed and the homeless before singing a traditional Easter hymn. The head that once was crowned with thorns, when the collection was taken.

The eucharistic liturgy was beautiful. "From the beginning you have created all things and all your works echo the silent music of your praise," the rector said. "Pour out your Holy Spirit over us and these gifts which we bring before you from your own creation."

The church was crowded and everyone let themselves go for the final hymn, *Thine be the glory*. As I left the church, Birmingham city centre somehow seemed a little less hideous than it had been when I first arrived.

The Bull Ring is about to be redeveloped, I was told, surely something to make even the most hardened sceptic believe in the possibility of a resurrection.

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Tom and Barbara Good of the classic television series *The Good Life* had a pleasant detached house with a neat garden, and Tom left for work every morning wearing a suit. But a few months into self-sufficiency, their cheeks were tanned, their figures trim, the garden resembled the *Somme*, and the kitchen was piled high with rotting vegetables.

Of course, the Goods weren't really coming at self-sufficiency from the right angle, as Evelyn Green is quick to point out. Mrs Green is chairman of the Meon Valley Self Sufficiency Group, Hampshire, and she is sick of comparisons with the inept *Surbiton* couple.

"There is more to self-sufficiency than sowing a few packets of seeds in the back garden," she says. Instead, her group's members aim to provide for as many as their food and energy needs as possible, while preserving the old-fashioned aspects of country and village life.

Not surprisingly with BSE and healthy eating in the public mind, a MORI poll this week confirmed that 60 per cent of us would prefer to eat organic food if it were more readily available in supermarkets. Organic product sales are up by a third on last year.

Mrs Green says: "People think we're all a bit loopy but we're just normal, hard-working people who are trying to promote a particular way of life. Our members are aged from their thirties to their eighties, and most have full-time jobs — there are doctors, solicitors, builders and nurses. But we work together, share our skills and promote the best things about country life."

The Meon Valley group was started in

1982 by Joy Pratt, who had been practising her own form of self-sufficiency for 15 years. She put up posters advertising the new group's first meeting and 35 people turned up. The group now has more than 100 members.

Mrs Green admits that, living in the depths of the countryside in the Nineties, it is impossible to be entirely self-sufficient. Electricity and a telephone are essential, as is some form of powered transport. However, the members of this localised collective promote self-sufficiency to varying degrees. Many keep small animals and the group arranges a monthly bulk order for feed.

In recent years the group's annual turnover has been around £35,000, putting it on the same footing as some local full-time farmers. Some members spin their own wool and produce leather goods, and all aim to be self-sufficient in basic vegetables and fruit, although they are at the mercy of the weather and sometimes limited by the type of soil on their land.

However, this is where the group comes into its own: "If you're trying to grow things organically, and not use pesticides, you might lose seedlings because pigeons get them or slugs find a way in," Mrs Green says. "But even if I lose all my lettuce like that, someone down the road might have a couple to spare, which I can exchange for something else."

Members sell surplus stock at group

## Even better than the Good Life

A self-sufficiency group of ordinary working people is in rude health, Sarah Edghill reports



Members of the Meon self-sufficiency group with Ella the pig

meetings, and exchange goods and services. At any time the monthly newsletter might offer for sale or exchange anything from muscovy ducklings to fleeces for spinning or goat's milk as well as printing recipes for old-fashioned lemonade and rose petal wine. "It works so well that you don't know it's going on," Mrs Green says. "Then

someone mentions that they had a leaking pipe and another member came out and fixed it in exchange for 5lb of honey."

As well as working her land, Mrs Green and her husband need a constant supply of wood for the range that heats their house and for cooking. "This time of year is also one of the busiest because so

much preparation needs to be done. Animals are expecting their young and we are planting seeds for the crops we hope will come up later in the year."

Kate and Andrew Goldsmith and their three small children live in Denmead, a village which has grown to the size of a small town. "We are right in the centre by the shops so the bottom of our garden is virtually in the car park, but we manage to do a lot with a small amount of space. About three-quarters of the garden is down to vegetables, and I also keep chickens and rabbits."

"If we need advice on any aspect of self-sufficiency there is always someone around happy to help."

Such work is extremely hard work. "Every night during the summer there is something that needs picking or freezing or turning into chutney," Mrs Goldsmith says. "Even small animals like ours take an hour a day to look after."

Zara Bampton started growing her own fruit and vegetables because she was worried by health scares and wanted her family to eat as well as possible. She is now self-sufficient in a wide variety of vegetables, as well as in lamb, beef and poultry. However, with the demands of children aged four and two, she was finding it difficult to devote the necessary time to her land, so now she shares both work and produce with a friend who lives nearby. "Sandra had always want-

ed to learn more about self-sufficiency, but didn't have the confidence to do it on her own," Mrs Bampton says. "We joined up about a year ago, and I have been able to show her how everything works, and she is always on hand to help out if I've got a problem with the children or we want to go on holiday."

The only cloud on the horizon for the entrepreneurs in the Meon Valley is the increase in EC directives. In the early years members dealt with milk surpluses by producing everything from yoghurt and cheese to ice-cream, but increasingly strict hygiene regulations meant many were unable to carry on. "You can no longer sell 'green' milk, as opposed to pasteurised, which precludes some members from sharing homemade produce," Evelyn Green says. "What used to be so easy ten years ago is now riddled with restrictions. It's a similar story with meat."

"If you take your beasts to an abattoir you aren't guaranteed to get your own meat back, because everything is done en masse. Because of that, most members now use home slaughterers; but if an animal is slaughtered at home you aren't allowed to sell the meat, which people used to do to cover some of their costs. Now some people share ownership of a steer, but the European directives have made everything more tricky."

The Meon Valley group won't allow such legalities to restrict their activities, and new members are joining all the time. "Once you've experienced the satisfaction of self-sufficiency, you'll never want to go back to any other way of life," Mrs Green says.

Surbiton never had it so good.

Readers fear country life is threatened by declining numeracy — how will farmers count the moles?

## Dilemmas without number

Out of a pile of letters received in the last month — thank you — there is one drawing our attention to yet another great rural tradition that is about to disappear: the rathole of technology. This one is of the mind rather than the hands, but no less important. I shall not reveal it at this stage lest you be too shaken to continue reading, but I stress that it is as vital to the numeracy of the nation as any computer/education election promise.

Let me tell you first about a 1930s booklet I have, called *Farm Reckoning*, which was an aid for those having to do sums in their heads. The only flaw in this booklet is that the laws of nature often take precedence over the principles of mathematics. Anyone who grows anything knows that the answer to "how many beans make five?" depends on whether the crows have anywhere to go for breakfast other than the field where you have sown the bean seed. When this booklet poses questions such as, "A small flock of 14 hens laid 2,730 eggs in a year. What was the average annual yield of each bird?" The correct answer is not necessarily the mathematical one. Something along the lines of "all depends" might be nearer the truth.

But Mr Thompson of Holcombe near Bath, Somerset, draws our attention to a more modern threat to rural numeracy. He writes:

do away, eventually, with a traditional skill? The most innumerate peasant used to be able — without hesitation — to subtract any number from 301 and announce the possible combinations that would lead to a finish as surely as the expert can in TV darts competitions.

He is, of course, right. Learning to do such calculations was the first step along a bumpy road which eventually leads to a full understanding of the average yield of a small flock of hens. A campaign to eradicate the electronic scoreboard might, therefore, be time well spent. But, more broadly, is the preservation of village life a worthy cause? It is widely assumed that it is, but Sir Neil Pritchard, writing from Daglingworth near Cirencester, Gloucestershire, offers an interesting view. He writes:

The earlier raison d'être of villages has, of course, disappeared. But it has not left a vacuum; it has been replaced by "commuter settlements, retirement enclaves" etc. with-



PAUL HEINEY



The traditional rural skill of being able to subtract any number from 301 without hesitation has been undermined

out which the village would have been deserted years ago.

Why should it be assumed that these are evil, nihilistic, giving no new life? I retired to this village 20 years ago. I have been active in many village activities. Is it self-evident that it would have been better for the village if I had been shuffled off to a retirement home elsewhere? Bringing villages "up to date, injecting new life, facilities and work opportunities" sounds a bit like "make-over-village-a-miniature-town". This is necessarily a good thing? The future of villages requires serious thought, not woolly-minded shibboleths and clichés which do not acquire validity from repetition.

I offer you that letter in the hope of further suggestions on the revitalisation of villages: no clichés allowed.

Finally, we must return to moles: creatures for which I expressed some admiration at their skilful burrowing and their ability to bring to the surface the crumbliest soil from deep within the tough old land. Meg Kingston writes to me of an invention for catching moles alive and thereby ridding oneself of them, but

**WRITE TO PAUL HEINEY**  
Reader's letters are welcome on countryside matters of any kind, from wildlife to village life, from people to politics. Letters are featured on the first Saturday of every month.

Send letters to: Paul Heiney, Weekend, 1 Pennington St, London E1 9XN

allowing the mole his freedom to labour elsewhere. She first of all raises a philosophical point when she notes that we always talk of moles invading "our garden" when it is just as much the mole's garden.

Anyway, Mrs Kingston sends me a cutting from her local newspaper which offers a "Live Catch Mole Trap". I rang Nigel Shearing of Long Meadow (the manufacturer) hoping that he had a way of easing my conscience in dealing with the pests. He has. It is a re-invention of a 17th-century trap originally carved of wood. It consists of two tubes with a one-way door at either end. He explained what you do:

Prod the ground with a 4 in rod to find the direction of the mole run. They are usually

about 9in deep. With a spade, open up the run and place the trap along it making sure it sits at the bottom of the run and the mole hasn't got to take a step up. There's no need to cover it up.

Here comes the unsavoury bit: When moles are caught, they get so angry that they pee a lot. What you want to do when you catch your first mole is save a bit of that pee-ed on soil, dry it and save it for future use. Next time you want to catch a mole, place the trap then take a bit of twig and wet the end of it by putting it in your mouth...

please be careful to do this in the right order... then dip it in the dry, pee-impregnated soil. Then drop

the twig in the trap. Moles are aggressive little creatures and if they think another mole has been in their run, they'll charge around and be in the trap before you know where you are. And still alive.

This, of course, raises the question of what to do next. Most towns and villages have recycling sites for newspapers and bottles, but have yet to see a mole bank. Mr Shearing thinks the law allows you to release them anywhere with permission, and due care and attention to the mole's future prospects. An old meadow might be best.

There again, we could turn this into a national debate as to where moles should be sent after being forcibly removed from their homes. Will it necessarily be a better life in a rural environment than it was in those town-like tunnels beneath the vegetable bed? Could a proper consideration of their needs and neighbourhoods lead us to new ideas on our own rural problems of retirement villages, community spirit, unwanted new structures thrown up overnight, and how many moles make five? Let me know.

Long Meadow, 01747 828357.

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## The American blown ashore

ON EASTER Sunday I saw a rare bird in a somewhat unlikely place. The bird was a pied-billed grebe, and the place was South Norwood Lake in London, just south of Crystal Palace.

I knew the bird was there, and I walked from Crystal Palace station through leafy streets to this public pond, which is in a small park. People were sitting about eating ice-creams, and robins and even a chiffchaff were singing in the flowering prunus trees. At the lakeside I turned my field-glasses hopefully on to several coots and mallards before I saw what I was looking for — a dumpy brown bird floating on the water, with little to remark on except its wedge-shaped white beak with a black stripe down it.

Still, there it was — a pied-billed grebe. If I had been on the other side of the Atlantic I would hardly have looked at it, because it is found throughout the Americas. Here, though, only a few have been recorded, all of them birds which have been blown across the ocean. It was first seen in December, when a local birdwatcher saw it emerge from the mist over the lake. It must have been the shock of his life when he realised this dingy ball of feathers was not a little grebe but a rare transatlantic vagrant.

### FEATHER REPORT

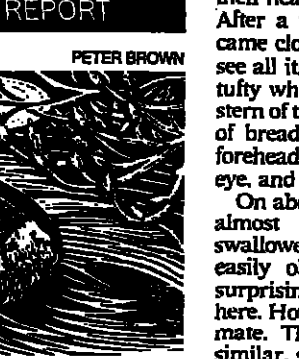


Expert angler: the pied-billed grebe

Now it floated behind a small island, and further round the lake I found a group of twitchers watching it, some of whom had already "ticked" a little crane in Kent earlier in the day, and were a bit blasé about a pied-billed grebe. However, it was to give us a wonderful show.

It was evidently quite at home on the lake. It was as indifferent to human beings as it was to the Canada geese who were creating a racket all around it, honking and rearing up and splashing

### FEATHER REPORT

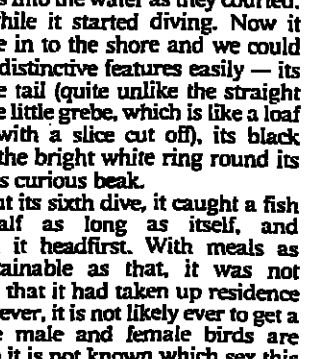


Expert angler: the pied-billed grebe

their heads into the water as they courted. After a while it started diving. Now it came close in to the shore and we could see all its distinctive features easily — its tuft white tail (quite unlike the straight stern of the little grebe, which is like a loaf of bread with a slice cut off), its black forehead, the bright white ring round its eye, and its curious beak.

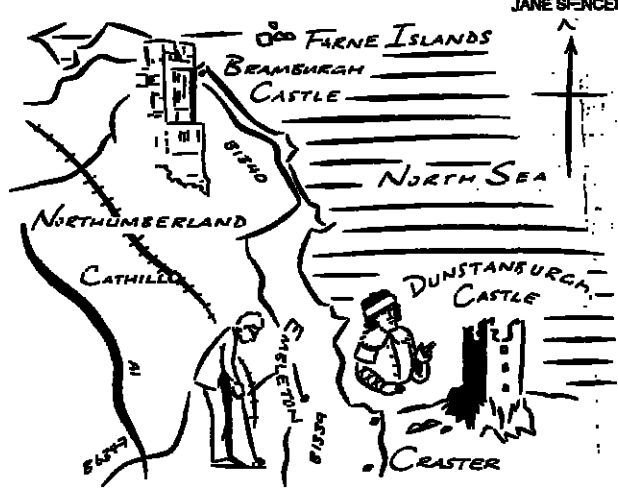
On about its sixth dive, it caught a fish almost half as long as itself, and swallowed it headfirst. With meals not easily obtainable as that, it was not surprising that it had taken up residence here. However, it is not likely ever to get a mate. The male and female birds are similar, so it is not known which sex this one is, but either way another pied-billed grebe is hardly likely to turn up in South Norwood. This pied-billed grebe may have found a comfortable home after its adventures — but its life is likely to be a lonely one from now on.

### FEATHER REPORT



Expert angler: the pied-billed grebe

DERWENT MAY  
What's about: Birders — look out for swallows over water. Twitchers — a surf scoter at Titchwell, Norfolk; a blue-winged teal at Bowling Green Marsh, Devon; a rough-legged buzzard at Dunlop Valley, Lancashire. Details from Birdline 0901 70222. Calls cost 40p a minute cheap rate, 50p at all other times.



ON THE SPOT: NORTHUMBERLAND

### Rural recommendations

The place: Dunstanburgh Castle, near Embleton. The view: Climb to the top of the gatehouse tower; east, the grey sweep of the North Sea; north, Bamburgh Castle and the Farne Islands; south, the pretty fishing village of Craster. The appeal: What is more romantic than a ruined castle? Northumberland is crowded with castles but this is the best and most isolated.

Afficionados: Turner was a fan; his are the finest and most majestic views of the castle. Seagulls enjoy the high cliffs that serve as the castle's seaward battlement.

Historical interest: With its walls enclosing 11 acres, it is the largest castle in England. Built in 1313 by Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, it was the stronghold of John of Gaunt (1340-99) after his return from the Hundred Years' War; from here he effectively ruled England.

Time of day/time of year to visit: Winter when the howling winds recall the ghosts of vanished knights. I have gone at midnight, too, when the full moon makes the castle spooky; splendid: English Heritage, however, won't let you in at night. How to get there: No access by car. Park at Craster and walk 11 miles north along the tops of the dunes, or park at Embleton and walk about the same distance south, first along the deserts, white beach, then along the dunes.

OS reference: 260221. Also nearby: Fine crab sandwiches to be had in the Jolly Fisherman at Craster. Dunstanburgh Castle Golf Course (clubhouse in Embleton) is a fine links course designed by James Braid and is open to non-members.

ERICA WAGNER

## THE TIMES & Hatchards Gardening forum

with Tim Smit and Penelope Hobhouse



READERS are invited to a forum with two of Britain's leading gardeners, Tim Smit and Penelope Hobhouse, on Tuesday, April 15 at 7.30pm at the Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7. Chaired by Stephen Anderson, *The Times* Gardener, the forum marks the publication of Hobhouse's book, *Garden Designs* (Frances Lincoln, £25) and Smit's *The Last Gardens of Heligan* (Victor Gollancz, £20). Questions will be invited.

Hobhouse, a designer, plantswoman and colourist, will reveal how she has created a range of successful gardens, from a courtyard garden in Paris to one on a windswept Scottish island. Smit, a former archaeologist, record producer and composer, will tell of his discovery and re-creation of the magnificent Victorian gardens at Heligan in Cornwall. Tickets at £10 (concessions for OAPs, students and the unemployed, with ID, £7.50) include £2 off both books, are available by phoning 0171-734 1483, by faxing the coupon below to 0171-494 1313 or 0171-287 2638, by e-mail on 187pic@hatchards.co.uk or by sending the coupon with your remittance to Hatchards, 187 Piccadilly, London, W1V 0LE. Tickets are also available to personal callers at Hatchards.

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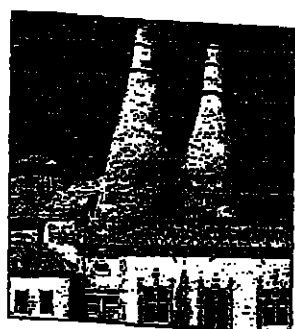
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# THE TIMES travel

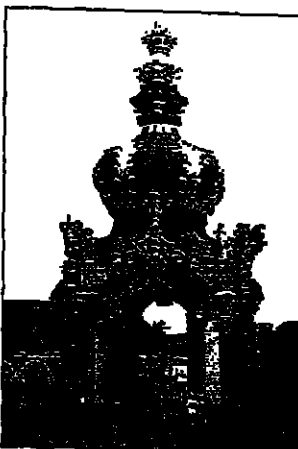
Seafood and walks on the menu

Norfolk · 23



## Music for Meissen men – and women

A cruise down the river Elbe reveals a newly restored eastern Europe



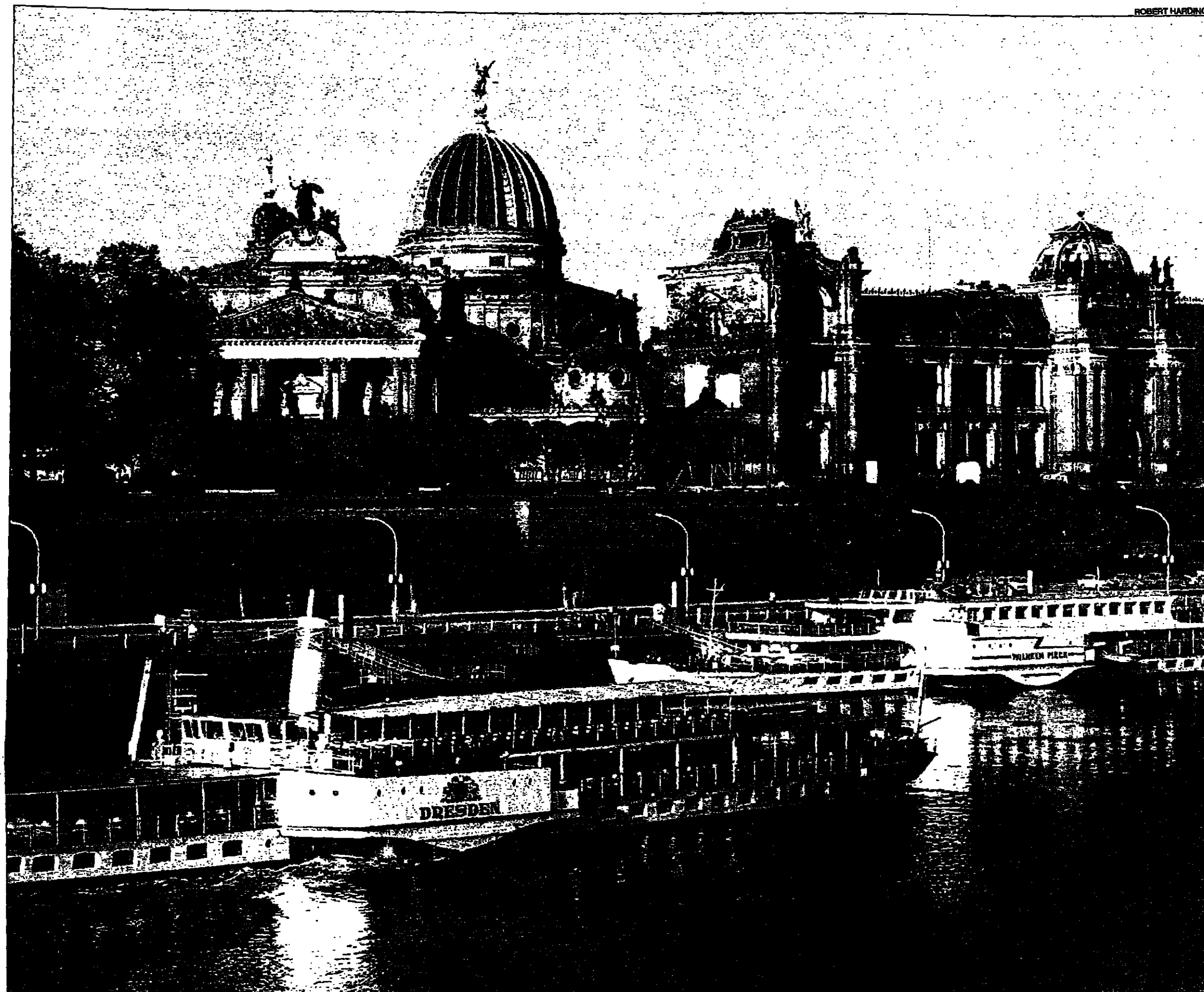
Zwinger Palace, Dresden

One of the most pleasing sounds to be heard in eastern Germany is the church organ. In the course of three days I visited a church in Torgau where an organist was practising, attended morning service in Wittenberg and an organ concert in Meissen Cathedral. As if in continuing celebration of the end of communism, the people of Meissen gather every day at noon, for about 20 minutes, to listen to the cathedral organ. Organ recitals are also frequently held in the Roman Catholic cathedral in Dresden.

The student of geography will know what else these towns have in common: they are all on the banks of the river Elbe. I was on a seven-day cruise on the *MS Dresden*, downstream as far as Magdeburg, then upstream from Dresden through the mountainous region of "Saxon Switzerland" and into the Czech Republic. We were well looked after and well fed, and if the passing landscape was on occasion uninspiring, there were always herons and storks along the riverbank.

Our first stop was Wittenberg, where almost every historic building commemorates Martin Luther. Catholic visitors to the Lutherhalle may feel overwhelmed by the number of pictures and manuscripts in celebration of his life; but the Renaissance-tiled oven which the great man apparently used is an impressive sight. Next door, the curious finger-gabled house occupied by Luther's contemporary, Philip Melanchthon, is now overhung by cranes.

The building work in this part of Germany is another testament to its emergence from the dark night of communism. It is not only new buildings that are going up in every town, but churches and historic monuments that are being restored. Most notably, the great domed Frauenkirche in Dresden, destroyed by bombing in 1945, is being rebuilt at a cost of some £70 million and over a period of ten years. In Magdeburg, which was another victim of Allied "area bombing" at the end of the war, the ruined St Johanniskirche is also to be



Dresden from the Elbe. The city used to be known as "Baroque Florence" and, although it was very heavily bombed during the war, it has been restored to something approaching its former glory

restored, as a museum, though many wanted it left as a war memorial.

On either side of its bomb-scarred twin towers the soulless monuments to Stalinism – flat-roofed office and apartment blocks – are grotesque. Magdeburg used to be known as the greyest of the grey cities of East Germany; now some of the worst examples of communist construction, such as the featureless rows of one-room flats in the cathedral square – are to be demolished. The cathedral is the largest in eastern Germany, a magnificent Gothic edifice which lost most of its stained glass in the Thirty Years' War but escaped serious damage in 1945. Perhaps it was protected by the spirit of Edith, the English

wife of the 10th-century Emperor Otto the Great, whose elaborate tomb is behind the altar. Among the remarkable sculptures in the cathedral is a striking wooden memorial, by Ernst Barlach, to the dead of the First World War. In the 1980s it became a focus for prayers for reconciliation and, in 1989, for the peaceful mass demonstrations which preceded the breaking down of the Berlin Wall.

From Magdeburg, capital of Saxony-Anhalt and only 75 miles from Berlin, we turned south to Torgau, where American and Soviet troops met on the banks of the Elbe on April 25, 1945. Here also is the first Protestant church (built in the 1540s and consecrated by Martin Luther) which has recently been given a new organ. The church is within the precincts of a renaissance castle, with a bear pit at its entrance that is once again inhabited by bears.

Having stopped at Meissen – to admire the cathedral, the Albrechtsburg and the glorious rococo porcelain figures of J.J. Kaendler – our cruise ship returned to Dresden, giving us a day to visit this stunning city. Despite carpet bombing by the RAF in February 1945, much of historic Dresden – it used to be known as "Baroque Florence" – has been and is still being restored to something approaching its former glory. The Zwinger palace, though badly damaged, was rebuilt soon after the war. Its fabulous art collection had been removed from Dresden for the duration. The opera house was reopened more than a decade ago.

The Residenzschloss (the Palace of the Electors and Kings of Saxony) is now being renovated, and the jewel in Baroque Dresden's crown, the Frauenkirche, will once again dominate the city skyline. It is surely impossible not to be moved by the sight of Dresden today. More than half a century after it was demolished by Allied bombers, blackened stone walls and church towers

still bear witness to the terrible firestorm that swept through the city in 1945, killing more than 50,000 people, many of them refugees from the east. Around the ruin of the Frauenkirche, devastated buildings still stand, within yards of a Hilton hotel.

As the ship moved away from the quay, we passed another survivor from the wartime air-raid – one of eight paddle steamers, more than 100 years old, which are still in operation.

Upstream we came to the grandiose Schloss Pillnitz, which has two "oriental" palaces and an English garden where red squirrels play. It was built for Augustus the Strong by the same architect, Matthäus Pöppelmann, who designed the Zwinger. Then we were into the strange landscape of Saxon Switzerland – vertical projections of rock and deep gorges.

War-time memories were never far away: built into a rock above the Elbe, the Königstein fortress, Colditz-like in its appearance, served as a prisoner-of-war camp in both world wars. On the other side of the river, the pretty village of Hohnstein is known as the centre of puppet-making – and as the site of a concentration camp for political detainees in the 1930s.

Our cruise continued a short way into the Czech Republic – the Elbe rises near the Polish border and flows east of Prague – before we turned for home. It was a surprise to learn that we had covered little more than a third of the river's total length of 725 miles. The Elbe is the third longest river of middle Europe (after the Danube and the Rhine); now that it has emerged from behind the Iron Curtain, it is well worth getting to know.

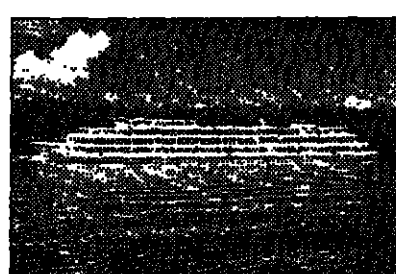
SIMON COURTAULD

The author was a guest of Peter Deilmann River and Ocean Cruise.

Mother Russia has been blessed with numerous vast rivers, lakes and inland seas which from the earliest of times were the first and natural highways. The adding of canals to these natural assets allow us to travel great distances from the remote forests of Kamchatka to Moscow and beyond aboard comfortable river vessels, which make for a perfect moving hotel.

This 14 night river voyage links the great cities of the "Barn," Russia's two most famous cities are also the greatest repositories of Russian art and architecture. Moscow, the medieval and 20th century capital has a wonderful heritage of early buildings, while St Petersburg, the creation of Peter the Great, benefited from the inspiration of Europe's greatest 18th century architects and craftsmen.

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DAY 3 St Petersburg. Morning visit to the Hermitage Museum. Afternoon free. Evening ballet performance at the Hermitage Theatre in the Winter Palace.

DAY 4 St Petersburg. Day free until late afternoon sailing.

DAY 5 Lake Ladoga. A relaxing day cruising across this vast lake.

DAY 6 Kishinev-Petrozavodsk. Today we will sail across Lake Onega, making a stop at the beautiful island of Kizhi. Visit the imposing 22 domed Church of the Transfiguration, a marvel of 18th century Russian wooden architecture. In the evening we will make a call at Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelia.

DAY 7 White Lake. Cruising the White Lake and the Volga.

DAY 8 Irma. We will moor in this pretty riverside settlement. Explore the countryside on foot and enjoy a Russian barbecue by the river.

DAY 9 Yaroslavl. Visit this well preserved "Golden Ring" city and see the magnificent Church of Elijah.

DAY 10 Kostroma. One of the loveliest rivers of the "Golden Ring" and home to the noble families of Gorky and Romanov.

DAY 11 Uglich. A delightful "Golden Ring" city, its skyline is dominated by the blue and gold cupolas of the cathedral.

DAY 12 Moscow. Morning on the Moscow Canal. Arrive Moscow at lunch time. Afternoon city drive. Evening visit to the Moscow Circus.

DAY 13 Moscow. Morning visit to the Kremlin including the fine collection of imperial regalia in the Armoury Museum. Afternoon free.

DAY 14 Moscow. Morning excursion to Sergiev Posad. Afternoon free. Evening concert.

DAY 15 Moscow. Disembark in the morning. Time for shopping and individual sight-seeing. After lunch continue to airport for late afternoon departure to London.

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\* These departure dates operate in reverse order sailing from Moscow to St Petersburg.

† This date also operates in the reverse order from Moscow to St Petersburg and is one day shorter (11 night less in St Petersburg). (Under £70 per person from all grades.)

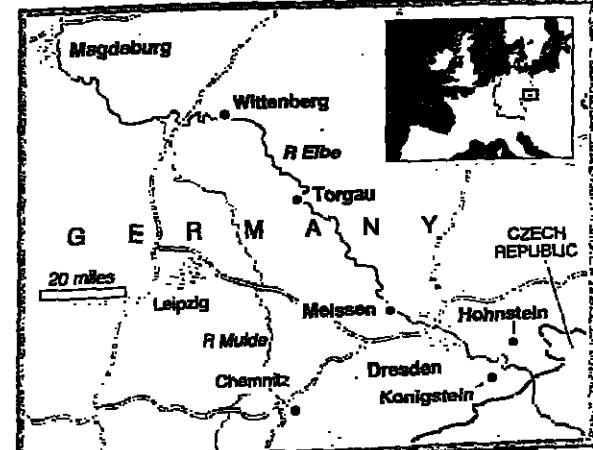
Price includes Economy class air travel, accommodation and full board on the MS Krasin, wine with dinner, shore excursions, entrance fees, ballet and concert performance and a visit to Moscow Circus, port taxes, UK departure tax, local guides, Cruise Speaker and Cruise Director. Not included: Travel insurance, Russian visa, optional excursions, tips to crew.

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### ELBE FOOT FILE

- Bookings through Peter Deilmann River Cruises, Albany House, Suite 404, 324/326 Regent Street, London W1R 5AA (0171-436 2931). Cruises may also be taken on the Danube, Rhine, Main, Moselle, Rhône and Saône rivers.
- A seven-day cruise on the *MS Dresden* costs £1,090 to £1,635 per person sharing an outside twin cabin; an outside triple cabin starts from £908. Prices include return Lufthansa flights from Heathrow, all meals and travel insurance.
- The season lasts from end March to beginning November, cruises run between Hamburg and Dresden. The *MS Dresden* carries about 110 passengers and about 45 crew and staff.
- The Travel Bookshop (0171-229 5260) recommends *Germany and the Germans* by John Ardagh (Penguin, £8.99), *Through the German Waterways* by Philip Bristow (Nautical Books, £9.95), *In Europe's Name*, by Timothy Garton (Vintage, £9.99).







## AROUND THE WORLD: A WEEKEND GUIDE

# Reef study with Raleigh

THE youth development charity Raleigh International (0171-371 8585) is looking for 17 to 25-year-old volunteers for its ten-week expeditions working on environmental and community projects in Belize, Chile, Malaysia, Namibia and Uganda.

In the International Year of the Reef, teams who will have completed preliminary sub-aqua training in the UK will join marine scientists on underwater research programmes to help protect one of the world's largest coral reefs off Belize.

In Namibia, volunteers help on school building projects, while the Uganda expedition involves work on health centres in rural areas. Participants are expected to attend a selection weekend, and raise about £2,950 towards the expedition costs with support from Raleigh.

## Amazonian adventures

A RAINFOREST holiday staying as the guest of a family who have set up an ecological reserve in the Amazon (£695 for seven days) is offered by Imaginative Travellers (0181-742 8612) in its South American programme for the truly adventurous.

Other unusual trips include an Inca Trail Tour, camping in less well-known sites (£575 for eight days) and a 16-day (£855) Hidden Ecuador Tour, visiting "Cloud Forests", volcanoes, markets and swimming holes. You stay in basic hotels, hostels and palm tree huts, and travel by local bus, train and on foot, with porters or llamas carrying the luggage.

There are opportunities to go riding, rafting and hiking on most of the trips. Meals, entrance fees and local transport are included in the price, but not international flights.

NOT AS part of an ecological programme, but to celebrate a wedding, honeymooners at the Pangkor Laut Resort in Malaysia can take part in a tree-planting ceremony in the rainforest, with their names inscribed on a plaque which is placed on the tree. Offered by Asiatravellers (01932 820050), the seven-night B&B holiday on a private island costs £2,152 per couple, including flights.

## Horse talk

TWO NEW riding holidays from Andalucia Trails (01892 730706) are based around local festivals in May.

The seven-night Jerez Feria centres on Europe's largest

horsefair, with half the holiday spent riding on beaches, old drover trails and into the Sierra de la Plata, the rest joining in the celebrations and sherry sampling at the fair itself. The cost is £595, fares excluded.

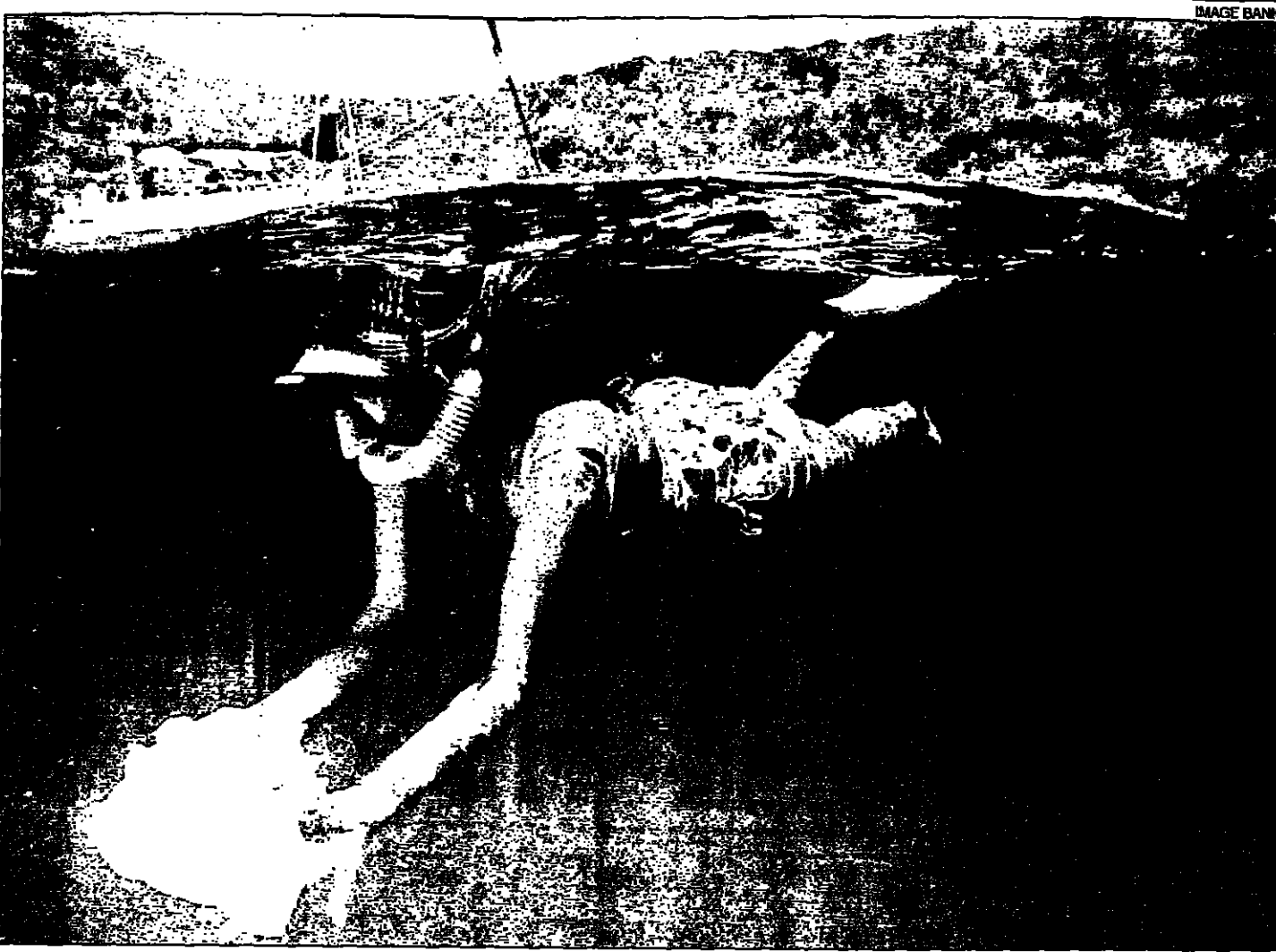
On the 14-day El Rocio Ride, holidaymakers ride along with other pilgrims on horseback, in covered wagons or on foot, on the traditional "Romeria", following an ancient trail through the Coto Donana Nature Reserve to El Rocio for the Feast of the Virgin of Rocio. Picnics, dancing and feasting round campfires are part of the fun. The cost is £1,295 (£1,095 for non-riders), fares excluded.

THE Youth Hostel Association (YHA) is looking for people over 18 who are able to work from April to October in its 240 hostels. No qualifications are required apart from an ability to deal with the public and assist with catering and clerical work. The pay is £335 a month, plus full board and accommodation. Details from the YHA (01629 822074).

## Irish sights

CIE Tours International (0990 143910) is offering one free flight to every two holidaymakers who book before April 30 on its new eight-day Hidden Ireland coach tour between May and September. The itinerary includes sightseeing in Dublin and visits to the Guinness Brewery before heading south to Galway, Killarney and the National Stud Farm. The price is from £620.

If you prefer travelling at a slower pace, Stena Line (0990 747474) can set you up with a gypsy-style caravan and an Irish



Raleigh International is looking for people to join marine scientists on underwater research to help to save coral reefs off Belize

draught-cross mare of guaranteed sunny temperament, oats, instruction and suggestions for overnight stays at country pubs or farmhouses. The cost for a week is from £338, which also includes ferry crossings for a car, two adults and a child.

LATEST election hideaway from Kuoni (01306 740500) is the Robinson Crusoe "no news, no shoes" island of Ari Beach, one of the most remote atolls in the Maldives where you sleep in thatched huts with open showers and spend your days in a hammock swinging between palm trees on the beach, occasionally exerting yourself enough to go night fishing or diving among spectacular tropical fish. The price in May is £703 half-board for a week, including flights.

## Florida homes

TRADITIONAL Florida homes in low-key destinations, away from the razzmatazz of the Orlando theme parks, are on offer from Florida Vacations (01727 841568).

## JILL CRAWSHAW'S TRAVEL TIPS

On the six-mile long Capivara Island, clapham stilt houses are a short boardwalk from the beach through tropical foliage. They cost from £689 for each of five sharing for a week. Other quaint mansions are available in Sanibel, Naples and Marco Island.

In Key West, Conch Homes cost from £699 for each of five people. Prices include flights and basic car hire (with compulsory "extras").

## Château nights

KEYTEL International (0171-402 5152), which acts as UK agent for the paradises in Spain and pousadas in Portugal, now also represents 450 châteaux throughout France.

Comforts and costs vary from approximately Fr300-Fr1,200 (£35-£140) per double room per night. A room for two in the Château du Roc Chautru in Perigieux costs Fr254-Fr500 (£30-£59); at the Château Scandillac in Bergerac a night costs between Fr500-Fr560 (£59-£66) and from Fr410-Fr995

(£48-£117) in the Château Plal Lannec in Brittany's Trebeurden.

THOSE staying near La Pera, about 20 miles from Girona in northeast Spain, can now visit the recently reopened Castillo de Pubol, where Dali spent his final years with his wife Gala. Decorated in surrealist style with some of the couple's original furniture, the castle is open until October from 10.30am to 7.30pm and in November until 6pm. Admission is 600 pesetas (about £2.50) per person. Details from the Spanish National Tourist Office (0171-499 0901).

## And so to work

WORKING holidays on National Trust properties this summer involve conservation work and construction projects using ancient and traditional skills.

At Ludshott Common in Surrey, the warden needs help to improve the habitat for protected birds, while on the Marsden Moor Est-

ate in West Yorkshire, fit volunteers are needed to work on moorland restoration, heather and grass seed propagation, bracken control and footpath maintenance. Prices average £50 for a week, £20 for a short break to cover accommodation and meals. For details call the NT Brochureline (0891 517751). Calls are charged at 50p per minute.

## On a budget

ALTHOUGH there is now no UK-based reservation agency for the budget Formule 1 hotel chain, a list of the 431 Formule 1 and Etap hotels worldwide is available by phone (0181-741 1001) or from the French Government Tourist Office on its France Information line (0891 244123). Calls are charged at 50p a minute.

Modern and strictly functional with a double bed, single bunk and wash basin (but no shower or WC), colour television and alarm clock, Formule 1 rooms cost Fr119, Fr129 and Fr139 (£14, £15.20 and £16.35) for one, two or three people. Continental breakfast costs Fr22 (£2.60).

# Italy on the cheap

## TRAVEL NEWS

WITH THE ITALIAN lire continuing to fall, package companies specialising in Italy are pressing its claims as somewhere to make holiday spending money go a long way. Magic of Italy, for example, says that a typical holidaymaker in Florence would spend only 80p on an ice-cream compared with £2.60 if he were in Paris; £5.00 on a pizza meal with a beer compared with £10.40; and £17 on a three-course meal compared with £30.

TOUR OPERATORS are considering applying for a judicial review of the 17.5 per cent Premium Tax on holiday insurance sales through travel agents and tour operators. Desperate lobbying by the industry failed to persuade Parliament in its dying days to amend the plans, which means that the tax on insurance policies bought through agents will be 13.5 per cent higher than those bought through brokers, banks or building societies.

The imposition is unlikely to be a priority for whichever party wins the election so an appeal to the courts is now seen as the only way to have it withdrawn.

TWENTY of Britain's attractions are offering Granby-free days during summer.

Mindful that grandparents are now taking more responsibilities for child-care, the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions is offering free admission when accompanied by a parent and child(ren).

The offer is valid on midweek days until July 18.

Those taking part are: Banham zoo; Blackpool Pleasure Beach; Blackpool Tower; Brean leisure park in Burnham, Somerset; Crealy Park, Exeter; Dinosaur World, Colwyn Bay; Drayton Manor park and zoo; Staffs; Dreamland Fun Park, Margate; Flamingoland, Malton, N. Yorks; Frontierland, Morecambe Bay; Funland and Laserbowl, London; Grand Parade, Eastbourne; Lightwater Valley Park, Ripon; Loudon Castle, Ayrshire; Mumbles Pier, Swansea; New Metroland, Gateshead; Paradise Wildlife Park, Herts; Peter Pan's Adventure Playground, Southend; Pleasureland, Southport; Rollerworld, Colchester; Segaworld, London; Twycross zoo, Atherstone; West Midlands safari & leisure park, Wicksteed leisure park, Kettering.

# Holidays by the book

Derwent May on the latest guides, from B&B to backpacking

Karen Brown must be one of the most indefatigable travellers of all time. She and her team have visited small hotels and bed-and-breakfasts around half of Europe and most of California, and have produced a series of neat, clear guidebooks giving their recommendations, to all of which they append the label "charming".

For example, they have an *Italy: Charming Inns and B&Bs* and an *Italy: Charming Bed and Breakfasts*. The first gives maps of enjoyable routes, such as a winding trail through the north to Venice, and follows it up with details and line-drawings of attractive hotels. The second has no itineraries, but picks out cheap B&Bs such as a farm near Orvieto with views of the Umbrian valley, and a farm outside San Gimignano where breakfast on the patio is served by "jovial hostesses".

Others in the series are France, which has two books with similar titles to Italy;

England, Wales and Scotland together, with "Charming Hotels and Inns"; and England on its own with "Charming Bed and Breakfasts". There are also inns and itineraries — all charming, too — for Ireland, Spain and California. (All titles Travel Press, £9.99.) In the Rough Guide series is *First-Time Europe* by Louis Casa Bianca (Penguin, £7.99), a hard-headed account of such things as money belts, thefts on trains, alcohol and Euro-toilets. Romance creeps in here and there. *Far Horizons: Adventure Travel For All* by Walt Unsworth (Cicerone Press, £8.99) sets out a tempting panorama of jungles, deserts, islands, and long-distance walks such as the King Ludwig Way in Bavaria.

*Rock and Roll Traveler USA* by Tim Perry and Ed Glinert (Fodor's, £12.99) guides fans not only to the music venues of New York

and Los Angeles, but also to historic street corners and Irish whiskey bars, and even the place where Janis Joplin hit Jim Morrison over the head with a bottle of Southern Comfort. *Backpacking in Mexico* by Tim Burford (Bradt, £11.95) leads you through the silver mines and the rattlesnakes. *Europe By Train 1997* by Katie Wood (Ebury, £10.99) is a fat book on lightweight paper that tells you not only how to get there but also what you will find when you do.

The Ordnance Survey has provided the maps for *A Guide to Garden Visits* by Judith Hitching (Michael Joseph, £12.99), which suggests 50 visits to places in Britain with good gardens. The author also recommends attractive *American Walks in London* by Richard Tames (Windrush

Press, £9.99) has ten step-by-step itineraries through London that could be followed with pleasure by anybody — Lord Rosebery and Thomas Arne come into it, as well as Woodrow Wilson and Sidney Bechet. Going the other way, the new *Blue Guide: Museums and Galleries in New York* by Carol von Pressentin Wright (Black, £17.99) is splendidly informative and up-to-date.

For France there is a richly illustrated handbook to *The Loire Valley* (Everyman Guides, £16.99), and one of the most specialised guides I have met. *Around and About Paris: The 15th-20th Arrondissements* by Thirza Vallois (Ibid, £15.95). This takes you through Hausmann's Paris, bringing its history to life in a wealth of detail, just as the author did for her earlier books on arrondissements 1-7 (inner Paris) and 8-12 (the Paris that expanded after the Revolution). This volume leads you to many of the "secret places" of Paris, from the old vineyard of Vaugirard to the couscous restaurants of Belleville.

# More thoughts on Jules Verne

A LETTER from a disgruntled couple who took a Voyages Jules Verne holiday to Cuba provoked a flurry of response when printed in Weekend two weeks ago. The Glaziers, of Hertfordshire, changed hotels at their own expense, citing filthy rooms and no hot water. Their flight was also 13 hours late. VJV replied that local advice was that the company switch hotels and suggested the couple may have been unsatisfied to Cuba.

A selection of other letters received included one from Lady Engle, of London N6: "We also travelled with Jules Verne to Cuba. The flight took 18 hours instead of nine as stated in its brochure. Changes of two out of the three hotels advertised had to be accepted without demur. A third-class firm in a time warp?"

From Sir Patrick Salt, Bury St Edmunds: "The journey to Cuba was horrific especially as we had been misled over the length of flight and the number of stops en route. Who would dream of going to Cuba from the UK via Costa Rica? Jules Verne takes your money and then refuses to accept responsibility for the ensuing chaos."

From P. Block, London NW11: "The Glaziers are not the only ones that have complained to Jules Verne but at least

they have had some sort of reply. The time from reporting at Gatwick to arrival at the hotel was 25½ hours. On arrival, we were told we had no reservations. We did not see the rep until our departure a week later. To blame the Cubans is quite wrong."

From Keith and Margaret Wilkes of Kippax, near Leeds: "We visited Cuba for two weeks with Sunworld. We had a first-class guide, driver and coach. Hotels, room, catering and service. Our chalet was spotlessly clean with all amenities, plenty of hot water, linen and towels changed regularly. The food was plain but with a large choice. I felt safer than in Italy — I would recommend Cuba to anyone."

From I.A. McCallum of Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire: "We arranged to do a trip to the Royal Cities of

Rajasthan on December 24. On the 18th we were told the itinerary had been changed, giving us no alternative — it turned out to be a disaster. Jules Verne had the temerity to say the accommodation was as advertised. They will not accept they are in the wrong. We are applying through the small [claims] courts for compensation."

From Sheila and John Jukes of Cumnor, near Oxford: "We have recently returned from a VJV tour of the Royal Cities of Rajasthan and have nothing but praise for the way the trip was organised. We were informed of changes to the schedule well before the departure date. Hotels had been upgraded and the ambitious programme for a 14-day tour covering 1,600 miles ran like clockwork."

From J.G. Greenly of Wolverhampton: "My wife and I have been on six holidays with VJV and on only one was there a change to the original dates — we were offered either our money back or transfer to another holiday. It may be that the couple who complained would have been happier with a more developed place like Florida."

Write welcome letters on holiday travel. Send them to: Letters, Travel Department, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E14 9XN or fax 0171-782 5124.

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- 7th Day Full day sightseeing in Chengde.
- 8th Day Return by rail to Beijing. 2 nights at the Gloria Plaza Hotel.
- 9th Day Day at leisure.
- 10th Day Early afternoon departure by Air China. Arrive London Heathrow late the same day.

Meals Full breakfast daily.

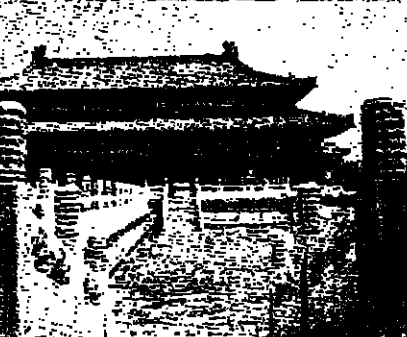
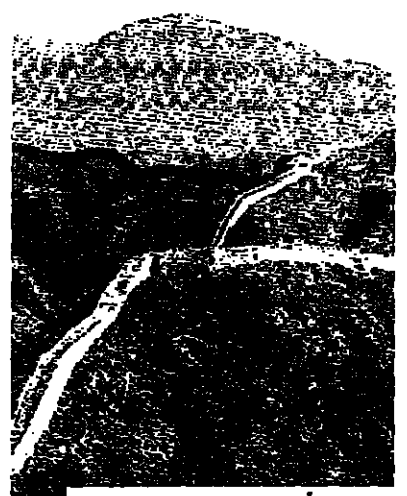
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# Stroke a euro, grow a yacka

## ADELAIDE

LEAVING Heathrow airport close to midnight on the first day of the month, I arrive at Adelaide, South Australia, 24 sleepless hours later at six in the morning of the third day, feeling spectral. At the airport, I am met by a smiling chauffeur behind the wheel of a 1950s stretched Chevrolet, a gigantic machine which whisks me into town. I check in at the Hilton hotel and eat a second unnecessary breakfast, then take a dazed stroll in the dazzling sun.

The streets are wide, laid out in a grid by the far-seeing Colonel Light in the 1830s. Traffic runs smoothly; there are no jams. Public buildings, such as the town hall, are unmistakably British colonial; other buildings form a mini-Manhattan. Local heroes deemed statue-worthy are

explorers, such as Charles Sturt. The pace on the streets is unhurried. There are few men in suits. I return to the hotel and lie down on the bed. It is 11 o'clock and I feel obstinately wakeful. The next I see of my watch it tells me I have been asleep for more than five hours.

UP AT 7.30 the next day, feeling disconcertingly normal. Rae Grierson, from the travel company Fruits of Inheritance, picks me up and drives me to the Barossa, an hour away.

This is where the wine comes from, including Jacob's Creek, Britain's favourite Aussie tipple, alas not my family vineyard. The Barossa is green, toiled over, lived-in, ripe. We pick our way through wineries, sampling as we go.

After not much of this I am unsure whether it is renewed jet lag or booze that is making me groggy.

We have lunch at an excellent small restaurant; £5 for a main course that would cost three times as much at home. I settle for chicken in pastry but nibble at somebody else's kangaroo. This, I am told, should be compared to a piece of well-hung Charollais beef: it lacks fat and is good for your cholesterol level. After a few more experiments I find I do not much like "native" foods, such as emu pâté, except for the fish (especially whiting) and the fruit and vegetables, which are magically robust, big and fresh.

On the way back to Adelaide we pause on a hilltop and look down at the valley. It is Germanically neat, which is not surprising because the church spires are Lutheran and the village is formed on a German pattern, with houses side by side and cultivated land laid out in long strips behind them. The valley looks as if it had been lived in for ever. But the Germans have been here barely 150 years.

## MURRAY RIVER

A DROP OF rain falling into this river in Queensland will take five months to reach the Southern Ocean, a few miles downstream from where I board the *Proud Mary* for a short cruise. The Murray is part of one of the world's largest river systems. But, shame on me, I have never heard of it. It is broad, muddy, willow-banked. Fish rise and sulphur-crested cockatoos squawk raucously. Pelicans flap by expressionless. Water skiers swoosh along.

My cabin is comfortable but too small for more than one person to dress in. All passengers are issued with name badges. We display first names only, out of respect for Australian mateyness, a style of behaviour I rather like.

We take a bus trip and embark on a non-energetic walk to some waterfalls. Our guide, Paul, points out the difference between trees and plants that live in or near the water and others that live on the (usually very) dry land. Trees that would die standing in water have learnt not to, and have learnt to survive long dry seasons as well.

It seems the craggy landscape was, half a billion years ago, a mountain range as high as the Himalayas. Erosion continues. That tall, waisted rock over there will one day be worn through and the top half will topple down to join all the other boulders scattered about. But I shall not be here to see it. At the end of our walk Paul tells us we have seen at least eight varieties of bird and 16 trees and plants.

After dark we get back on the tour bus, now equipped with a lamp for spotlighting wombats. They seem to me an unattractive, pig-like creature, often scared from fighting over females, but the old ladies aboard "ooh" and "aah" as though the wombats were cuddly cats. Caught in the light, the wombats stumble about foolishly or scuttle down their burrows. In the distance I see my first kangaroos. Paul tells us a kangaroo with two "joey" in her pouch can provide them with different milks to suit their maturity. I imagine a row of taps, as on a pub counter.



On the sheep stations, as farms are called, the "paddocks" are fields of several thousand acres where the only way to get around is by bike or truck.

## PURVIS STATION

IAN CLARKE meets me off the boat and drives us to his station, as farms here are called. The wool market is in poor shape. What it needs, I hear, is another world war, so we can all get back into khaki. Failing that, the Clarks have diversified into hospitality, restoring their home and adding a kitchen and a dining room/sitting room. There is a chef. We eat hogget in considerable style.

In the morning Ian takes me on a boat trip through the creek at the bottom of his garden, out through a lagoon into the Murray River, circling back to the creek through another lagoon. Ian's creek is a genuine billabong: though fed from the river, it never dries up. I hope I have at least this bit of Oz lore right.

Later we drive through Ian's paddocks, as he calls fields of several thousand acres. I am beginning to realise that the plant and animal life in the two environments — river and land — are completely different.

Ian, I notice, carries a gun in his truck. Why? To shoot kangaroos and stray (feral) dogs. The dogs kill the sheep and the kangaroos eat their grass. We see no dogs but several kangaroos. The first two or three Ian poops off at hop away into trees. But, firing from the driver's seat, he gets a line on a kangaroo that is slower off the mark. We drive closer and Ian puts a last shot through its head. He gets out with a knife in one hand, a steel in the other. He cuts up the dead animal and throws the pieces in to the truck. Back at the station they are fed to a bunch of pups.

■ Singapore Airlines' return flights to Adelaide, from London or Manchester, start at £649 in low season (April 16-June 13) and are available through the long-haul specialist Australis (0171-734 7755). The airline occasionally runs special offers. Information from its reservations line (0181-747 0007). Ground arrangements are all bookable through Australis.

■ Adelaide Hilton, £50 per person a night, based on twin share. Room only.

■ A two-night/three-day Murray River cruise on board the *Proud Mary* paddle-steamer, costs £260 per person, based on twin share, including all meals, shore excursions and activities.

■ Portree Station, Blanchetown, from £38 per person a night, based on twin share, and including breakfast and three-course dinner.

## FACT FILE



■ Arkaroola Tourist Resort, Northern Flinders Ranges, £45 per person a night twin share. Room only.

■ Kangaroo Island Odysseys (wildlife safaris), with Anna Howard, cost £264 per person

for a two-day, one-night tour, based on twin share.

■ Barossa Valley, Lantzerac Country Estate, from £45 per person per night, based on two sharing, including dinner and breakfast.

■ Barossa Valley, self-drive wine touring to the Barossa. A four-day/three-night round trip from Adelaide, including rental car and accommodation, from £128 per person, based on two travelling together.

■ For general information on holidaying in South Australia, call the Aussie Helpline on 0900 022000.

■ Reading: *Manning Clark's History of Australia*, by Manning Clark (Penguin, £15). *Cooper's Creek*, by Alan Moorehead (Penguin, £6.99). *South Australia*, by Denis O'Byrne (Lonely Planet, £8.99).

Curdinmurka strip: Across the railway line from the airstrip, a tented camp has arisen. Perhaps 4,000 people have come, mostly by road, bringing their tents and campers with them. Queues for showers form at a huge truck. The toilets are of the improvised variety, i.e., horrid, smelly holes in the ground. I am awarded a place in a tent for two and a swag (sleeping bag).

Darkness falls. I struggle into my dinner jacket, eat a barbecued dinner and ride in an open wagon a few hundred yards up the railway line to the ball. There is a large springy dance floor, soon covered by swaying, gyrating, slightly manic people of all ages. Alongside the floor is a platform from which the night's chief entertainer, surrounded by a deafening corps of musicians, is belting out songs that sound vaguely familiar. He is Patrick MacMahon and is, I learn, a Neil Diamond singalike. My sense of unreality increases. Here I am, out in the desert and all dressed up, a million miles from anywhere familiar, and I am watching not a singer but

Continued on next page

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## CURDIMURKA

AIRBORNE again in the little plane, we head for Curdimurka, a patch of aridity straddling an old railway

line where there is to be, improbably enough, a ball, for which I have dragged my dinner jacket all this way. Dropping into places by plane is getting to be a casual experience, like stopping at a garage or supermarket. We join maybe 30 planes on the

these but will mention only two: a small variety of kangaroo called a euro (yes, really) and a plant called a yacka. This is not much to look at, reminding me rather of a fat pipe-cleaner sticking out of a bunch of leaves, but I am told it grows at the rate of 18 inches every 100 years. So some I am looking at must be 300 years old or more.

In the bouncing truck I am so busy keeping the hat on my head and the sun off it that I fall to bother about the hands that are holding the hat down. They fry, or perhaps boil, and by the morning are seriously swollen. But they don't hurt.

Nearly 500 kilometres from take-off we land at an unmanned airstrip and motor on to Arkaroola. This is a mountain range, a huge private property dedicated to conservation. We take a long drive through the range in an open truck where we see all kinds of things. I could go on about

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... while the North Island of New Zealand has vast, thriving farms and cities with metropolitan chic



Russell Pier, jutting out into the tranquil waters of the Bay of Islands, was not always so serene. It has a steamy past. As the country's first capital, Russell was a brawling, bawdy port described as "the hell-hole of the Pacific"

Continued from page 18  
his doppelgänger. I marvel at the willingness of Australians to toil after their pleasures. These are people who will drive 200 kilometres for lunch. Only the Irish can match their pursuit of good times.

#### KANGAROO ISLAND

HERE, another short plane-ride from Adelaide, is South Australia in a nutshell. There are dusty roads, stretches of untouched bush and empty, golden beaches. Sheep graze in what might be English meadows if it were not for the koalas above them in the trees. We come across a team of conservationists plotting the spread of the koala population by satellite and computer. It seems there are too many of them. They strip trees bare and make life hard for other animals and birds. So they will have to be culled.

I see penguins noisily settling down for the night after a day feeding at sea, and wallabies hopping by. A kangaroo allows itself to be stroked and, at a picnic, one wallaby even accepts a slice of avocado. Huge sea lions stretch out on a beach. One little fellow toddles anxiously among them look-

ing for its mother. He tries to cuddle up to one but is snapped at, and waddles away. We humans are kept at a distance so we will not disrupt their ancient colony.

Flying home, I ruminate on why Australians have caught the heritage bug. Every shack in the outback seems to be being tarted up and touted as a site of historic interest. But Australia's real history is in its pre-history, in the creation of its landscape and the slow evolution of its plants and trees and animals — and in its Aboriginal peoples, of whom I have seen almost nothing (apart from one man waving a beer can enthusiastically at the Neil Diamond sing-alike).

I find myself wishing that Australia devote more of its energies to preserving, say, the several varieties of kangaroo that are dying out and less to prying up the vanity of Europeans' interest in their own brief occupation of the land. My peevishness about this on getting home is a dozen times intensified by jet lag, which is fearsome.

ERIC JACOBS

● The writer was a guest of Singapore Airlines and the South Australia Tourism Commission



On Kangaroo Island excess koalas are being culled



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## Where the tree god rules

**B**etween Auckland and the Bay of Islands, along the sometimes unsealed road which runs through Dargaville, the centre of New Zealand's Dalmatian community, stands all that is left of the great kauri forests which covered the land before the loggers came from Europe and laid them waste. The greatest individual survivor is Tane Mahuta or "God of the Forest", a 2,000-year-old tree which, according to Maori lore, is the son of the All Sky Father and the Earth Mother. It is certainly a big tree — nearly 140ft tall and almost 40ft in girth.

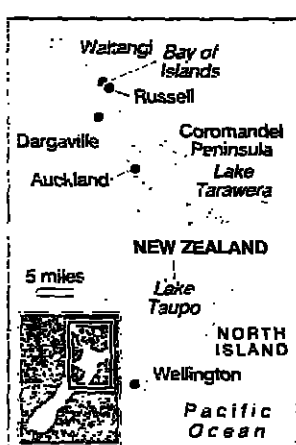
By the roadside nearby, a signpost advises: "You are in the heart of a small remnant of Earth's most ancient eco-systems. Breathe deeply and tread softly." Standing in the presence of a living object which was a sapling during the life of Christ, I was inclined to do just that: Tane Mahuta certainly made a century and a half of Western civilisation in these remote islands seem puny by comparison.

Later, I read in the *North and South* magazine that the postwar generation of New Zealanders are just hitting the 50-year mark. 47,524 of them born in 1946 alone. "In our time," the author wrote, "New Zealand has been transformed from a green and sleepy overprotected agricultural economy to a rambunctious South Pacific casino."

**T**ane Mahuta and the "rambunctious casino" seemed light years apart and yet, travelling from top to toe of the North Island, I saw enough metropolitan chic and raw wilderness to suspect that there was room for both.

My first image of New Zealand was an obviously omnivorous one of bunter and sheep. Sir Edmund Hillary and the All Black rugby forward Colin Meads. I was aware of Kiri Te Kanawa (whose appearance in *Don Giovanni* was a sell-out during my visit), Kerry Hulme and the Booker prize-winning *The Bone People*. Katherine Mansfield and Ngāi Marsh, but they paled before my sense of rugged farmers and VC-winning Anzacs.

In a tour just over a week long I stayed only one night in a large hotel, and even that was a complex of timber cabins set around a "lodge" in thick bush at the foot of the Coromandel peninsula. The rest of the time I was in accommodation of a less impersonal kind, ranging from urban B&B or "boutique hotel" to two rural "farm stays", where one ate with the family and slept in their spare room. The two farms could not have been a more complete



#### NEW ZEALAND FACT FILE

- Silk Cut Travel, Meon House, College Street, Petersfield, Hampshire GU32 3JN. Reservations and Tailor Made inquiries, 01730 265211. Air New Zealand, 0181-846 9595.
- Tim Heald took a trip with Silk Cut Travel's (01730 230370) new programme to New Zealand, which focuses on accommodation in private homes, working farms and lodges. Sixteen-night fly-drive packages start from £2,128 per person (April 1 to June 30) based on two sharing. The price includes return scheduled flights from London Heathrow to Auckland with Air New Zealand, farm-stay accommodation on a half-board basis and car hire. Executive-stay fly-drives, accommodation with families in private homes, start from £2,768 per person (April 1 to June 30).
- New Zealand Tourism Board, New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4TQ (0171-839 0360).
- Reading: *Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* (£20) and *The Oxford Book of New Zealand* (£7.99), both by Keith Sinclair (OUP). *New Zealand Travel Survival Kit* Lonely Planet, £12.99. *Mobil Guide to New Zealand* (Heinemann, £14.99).

contrast. The first was in the far north, a few miles inland from the first capital, Russell, now a quiet seaside resort but once a brawling, bawdy port described as "the hell-hole of the Pacific". Across the water lies Waitangi, where the British and the Maoris signed a famous land treaty, now widely deplored. Waitangi also has a lush and spectacular golf course.

Sam Ludbrook was a former captain of the golf club and fulfilled my expectations by being an accomplished all-round sportsman and countryman, robust in attitude and speech. Once, we stood outside his home, Ludbrook House, gazing across the croquet lawn and the ha-ha to his grazing beef cattle and the luminous blue of a campers' tent, pitched by the bank of his creek. Sam was gratified by the campers because they had taken the trouble to call at the door and ask his permission. This was gladly given and he had advised them on the best spot to choose.

Many other campers, however, did not ask. On one occasion, driving to golf with his wife Chris, he came across four of his bullocks sauntering

down the main road, running the gauntlet of cars and trucks. The nearest gate was swinging free and there in his field was a family enjoying a picnic. Sam, not mincing words, explained to them that they had released thousands of dollars worth of his assets on to the public highway, were eating their lunch on his property, and would they remove themselves. They left, muttering.

**S**am also has trouble with mushroom-pickers. Once, after spying a man gathering up armfuls of fungi on his land, he pursued the man's car for two hours. Eventually it drew up outside a suburban house in Whangarei. Sam got out of his car and cut two cabbages from the garden. When the mushroom-picker remonstrated, Sam said: "You've been helping yourself to my veggies, now I'm helping myself to yours."

Although Ludbrook House was built only in the Twenties, Ludbrooks have been farming that land since the pioneer days of the last century. Many of them lie in the graveyard outside the white church at Te Waimate, where Bishop

Selwyn briefly had his headquarters. Inside the church, the hatching of the 58th Foot, the Rutlandshires, commemorates their service and, sometimes, death in the Maori wars of 1845.

So the Ludbrooks are, in every sense, part of the soil, New Zealand born and bred. Not so the Ellises, of Watership Down. Roland and Claire have a 350-acre sheep farm overlooking Lake Taupo with Mount Ruapehu on the horizon. This supposedly dormant volcano erupted last year affording the Ellises a grandstand view of the ensuing pyrotechnics. Pumice and other volcanic residue are part of the landscape.

Roland, or "Roly", was the fifth generation of his family to play rugby football for Rugby School, and subsequently served as a major in the 15th/19th Hussars. After many years' contract farming in Britain he decided this was a mug's game and that he must have his own property. Britain was too expensive, so, in 1992, he bought a small part of what had once been the station of Prime Minister Keith Holyoake and set about building a house and establishing his own farm.

In appearance, ruddy, burly and corduroyed, with a plummy voice, he seemed, at first, the ultimate Pom. Yet in his identification with the land he farms he seemed as much of a Kiwi as Sam Ludbrook.

Outside the house everything is still quite raw: the wood of the single storey house still bright, the saplings along the newly gravelled driveway pliant in the breeze. Inside, however, photographs of cavalry officers and racehorses, family silver, exposed timber and a comfortable sofa make one feel that Roly and Claire must have been in situ for as long as the Ludbrooks.

The farm is named Watership Down after property in Berkshire owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber that Roly once looked after. Appropriately, the place is ankle-deep in Hazels and Thumpers, or "bloddy rabbits" as Roly

said with feeling. The little beasts, he added, were almost as pestiferous as possums. Possums were kept under marginal control by the Government's regular "carrot drops", in which poisoned carrots were dropped from aircraft in a Pythonesque attempt to cull them. Roly didn't think either possums or bunnies in the least bit cuddly. Like the thistles, which no amount of spraying could eliminate, they were the enemy.

After breakfast, we drove in his elderly Japanese truck to the kennels, picked up his three working dogs, and toured the property. It could almost have been a hill farm in Wales or Scotland.

Despite the dodgy clutch, we negotiated every steep hillside to the summit, and the views were stupendous. Standing there, Roly pointed to his boundaries and charted the progress of the surrounding farms. One over there one had just been sold for forestry; another was being turned over to dairy. Before long he was afraid he would be the only sheep farmer left in the vicinity. He wasn't happy. A whole way of life, his way of life, seemed to be under threat.

There has been a drift from the land to the city in New Zealand, and yet, despite the magazine article positing the notion of the "rambunctious casino", I was unconvinced. In Auckland I stayed in an elegant "boutique hotel" run by Mariette Henning-Wells. It was the epitome of suburban

chic with a Kiwi twist — a pool overlooked by kumquat, hibiscus, mandarin, oleander and palm, and a breakfast menu which began with the message: "I would like to greet the day in slow motion."

In Wellington, the B&B was a modern apartment overlooking the harbour. It was owned by the country's leading manufacturer of liquorish.

In both cities there were modern shopping malls, cool new restaurants on converted quaysides, local seafood and Sauvignon Blanc. I was impressed but not awed. One morning earlier I had woken at dawn and set sail across Lake Taupo under the gaze of an old volcano and sacred Maori forests to breakfast in Hor Water Bay, where the sand was baking underfoot and steam rose off the waters.

Halfway across I plunged a line off the stern of the yacht, *Clearwater Pride*, and a 7lb rainbow trout obligingly sank its jaws into the hook and emerged in time to be baked for lunch with a stuffing of fresh mint and kiwi fruit. The experience made me feel almost as close to nature as the farmers with whom I had stayed.

Civilised though its cities may be, New Zealand is still, essentially, the land where Tane Mahuta reigns supreme.

TIM HEALD

● The author was a guest of Silk Cut Travel and Air New Zealand.

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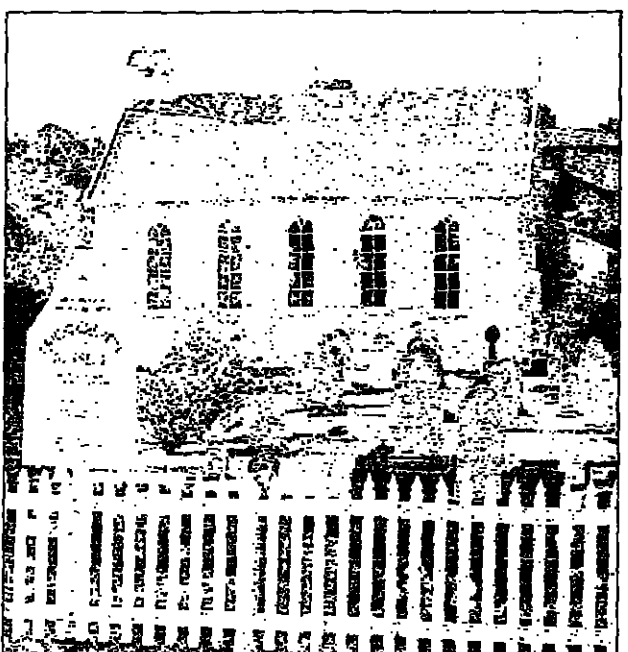
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Christ Church, Russell, said to be the country's oldest church



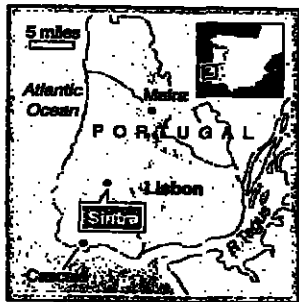
Weekend break: Sintra is one of Portugal's architectural gems and well worth the short journey from Lisbon

# Byron was on the right line

It is of the essence that England's most famous Romantic approved of Sintra. In 1809, after a week of losing his breakfast on the Lisbon packet from Falmouth, Byron landed in Portugal. "I am very happy here, because I love oranges, and talks had Latin to the monks, who understand it as it is like their own — and I go into society (with my pocket-pistols), and I swim in the Tagus all across at once, and I ride on an ass or a mule, and swears Portuguese, and have got a diarrhoea and bites from the mosquitoes. But what of that? Comfort must not be expected by folks that go a pleasuring."

The boy wonder stalked about Lisbon, found it filthy and was directed into the hills. The lush heights of Sintra were in peril of getting a tacky name for themselves as a place of refuge for bored merchants and apostles of decadence, such as William Beckford, but the young poet instantly caught a dose of brochure-writer's hyperbole.

"The village of Sintra about fifteen miles from the capital is perhaps in every respect the most delightful in Europe," he wrote. "It contains beauties of every description natural and artificial, palaces and gardens rising in the midst of rocks, cataracts and precipices, convents on stupendous heights, a



distant view of the sea and the Tagus...

I went to Sintra, in part to test Byron's description, and was surprised to find there is a good deal of truth in it. That he hadn't yet seen anywhere else in Europe is beside the point, his egotism made him an uncannily good judge. Certain places effortlessly embody our dreamscapes. Sintra, for the British, loomed over by crags and fissured by wooded ravines, encrusted with way-out Baroque and Moorish fantasies, is a romantic counterpart to the sobriety of our little island. This is Tangiers with a smell of Kent woods; Sevenoaks with a fever.

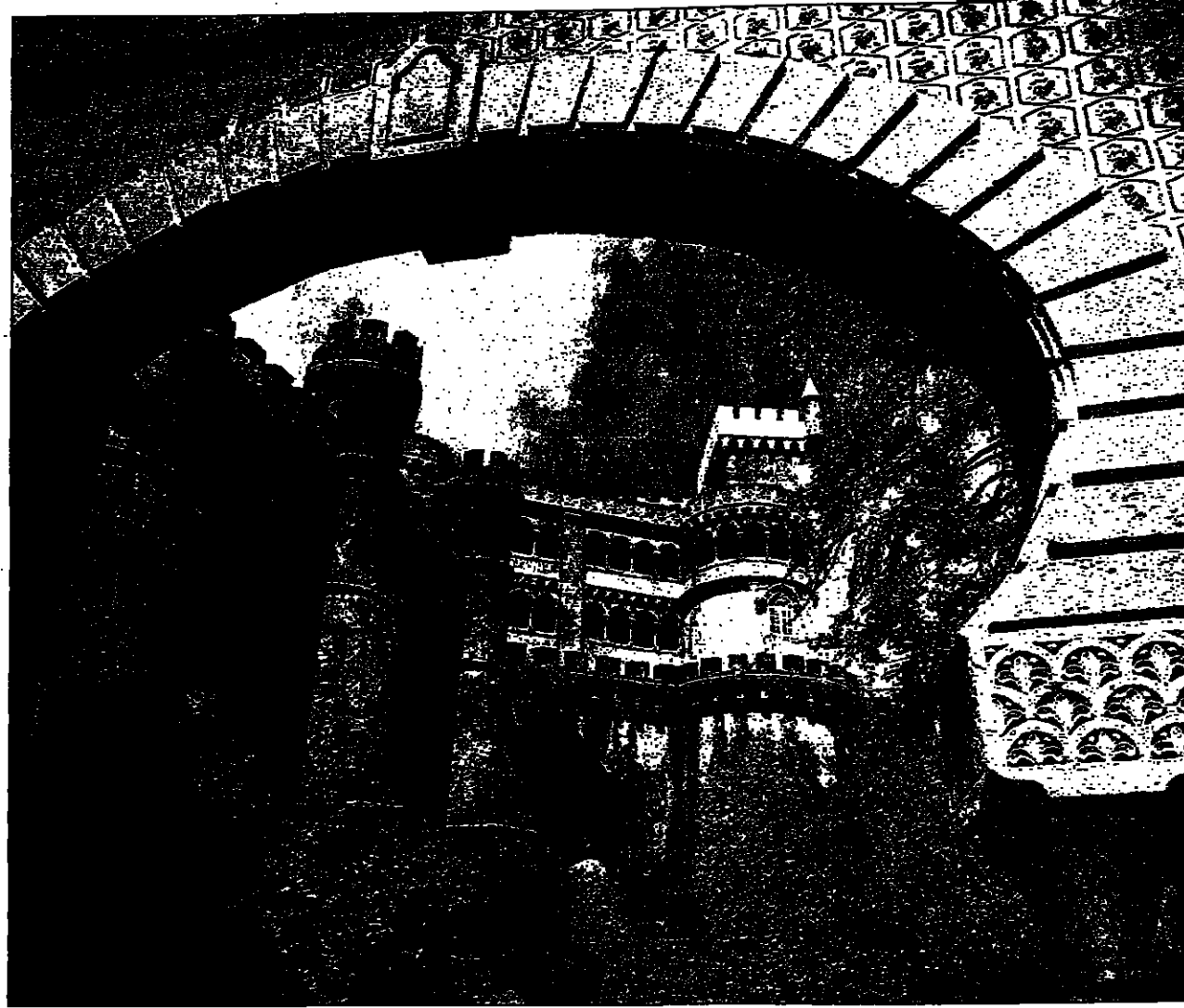
To a British visitor with the remotest vestige of propriety there is a set itinerary to Sintra imposed by its remarkable architecture.

The town can no longer be described as a quiet hill village. Tour buses drizzle through its streets and the best

way to enjoy its faintly besieged charms is to take the train from Lisbon and walk or hire a taxi. (You should stay overnight at the Hotel Central, or use the Turismo for guidance. A glass of white Burgemester port and the fall of dusk, and the town centre is suddenly blessed by peace.) I arrived in a hire car, a sin that offered the advantage of lazy access to the places that must be seen.

Sintra's architectural curiosities are out of all reasonable proportion to its size, its chief attraction being the bizarre centrepiece of the Palácio da Pena on the hilltop of the pretty Pena park, proof that many Germans were quite mad 150 years ago. Ferdinand de Saxe-Coburg-Gotha's summer residence (he was married to Maria II) puts Disneyland's cardboard turrets and ramparts in the shade, and must be one of the greatest follies of Europe after Neuschwanstein.

There are further obligatory sites: on two rocky hills to the north, the original Castelo dos Mouros, from which the 12th-century Moorish commander viewed with dismay the barques of the arriving Crusaders; another palace, the Seteais, a former monastery now a hotel *de luxe* for the corpulent likes of movie executives and Formula 1



Sintra's chief architectural curiosity is the Palácio da Pena, summer residence of Ferdinand de Saxe-Coburg-Gotha

teams. As if to make amends for such ostentation, the cork-lined cells of the Convento dos Capuchos, which lies at the end of a snaking birch-lined road, all dourness, muffled quiet and penitential quiet.

There must have been some-

thing in the nature of the Portuguese, a stoicism laced with Catholic tolerance, which has let the extravagance of Sintra's visitors pass. (Possibly it was the damp. The sun shines most days but I noticed the atmosphere robbing me of

indignation at the flocks of other tourists, a fact I put down to the soothing humidity of the surrounding woods.)

To a heritage-saturated British visitor it seems incredible that a town which has seen what Sintra has seen should have stayed so unselfconscious and calm.

One result of its memorable calm is that the town itself, not the follies round it, is the best part of a visit. I could turn two corners and there was not a foreigner about. Another two corners and it was a mere ten yards to the Tulhas Bar in Rua Gil Vicente, with its excellent, languidly served *pinchos de gambas* and chips.

These reminders of fundamental southern slowness, and the charming if haphazard domestic architecture of Sintra-Vila, are a more than adequate justification of Byron's uninformed enthusiasm.

However, it is a curious fact that the town's most magnificent building does not feature in most guidebooks. Five minutes' walk from the Tulhas Bar on the road to the coast is a grand and fantastic *quinta* of many towers, the Belvedere.

Subdued by the total war of tour buses and their regiments, the centre of Sintra can't be what it once was, but strolling past the Belvedere after lunch, which I did several times, offers proof that the Sintra of your imagination is still alive.

Even among the competitive

facades of Venice's smaller churches I don't think I ever saw a more obsessively decorated execution of a Baroque building than this splendid, damp-streaked masterpiece.

The game may be almost up; but better late than never, pal — as Byron so succinctly put it about a completely different amatory encounter.

JULIAN EVANS

● The author was a guest of British Airways Holidays.

## FACT FILE

■ How to get there: British Airways Holidays (01293 723100) offers a three-night Lisbon City Break at the three-star Hotel Capitol (about five minutes from Edward VII Park, close to the city centre) from £295 per person (until July 1), including scheduled return flights, bed and breakfast and transfer.

■ Where to stay: Hotel Central, Praça da República 35, 2710 Sintra (00 351 1 923 00 63), double rooms from 9,700 escudos (about £42). Quinta das Sequoias, App 104, 2710 Sintra (00 351 1 924 38 21).

■ For further information on hotels at all prices, and places to visit, call at the Turismo, close by the Praça da República, which is open 9am-5pm Jun-Sept, and 9am-7pm Oct-May. Or phone: 00 351 1 923 39 19.

■ Car hire in Lisbon can be arranged with Hertz through British Airways Holidays and costs about £35 a day for the first five days, £28 thereafter.

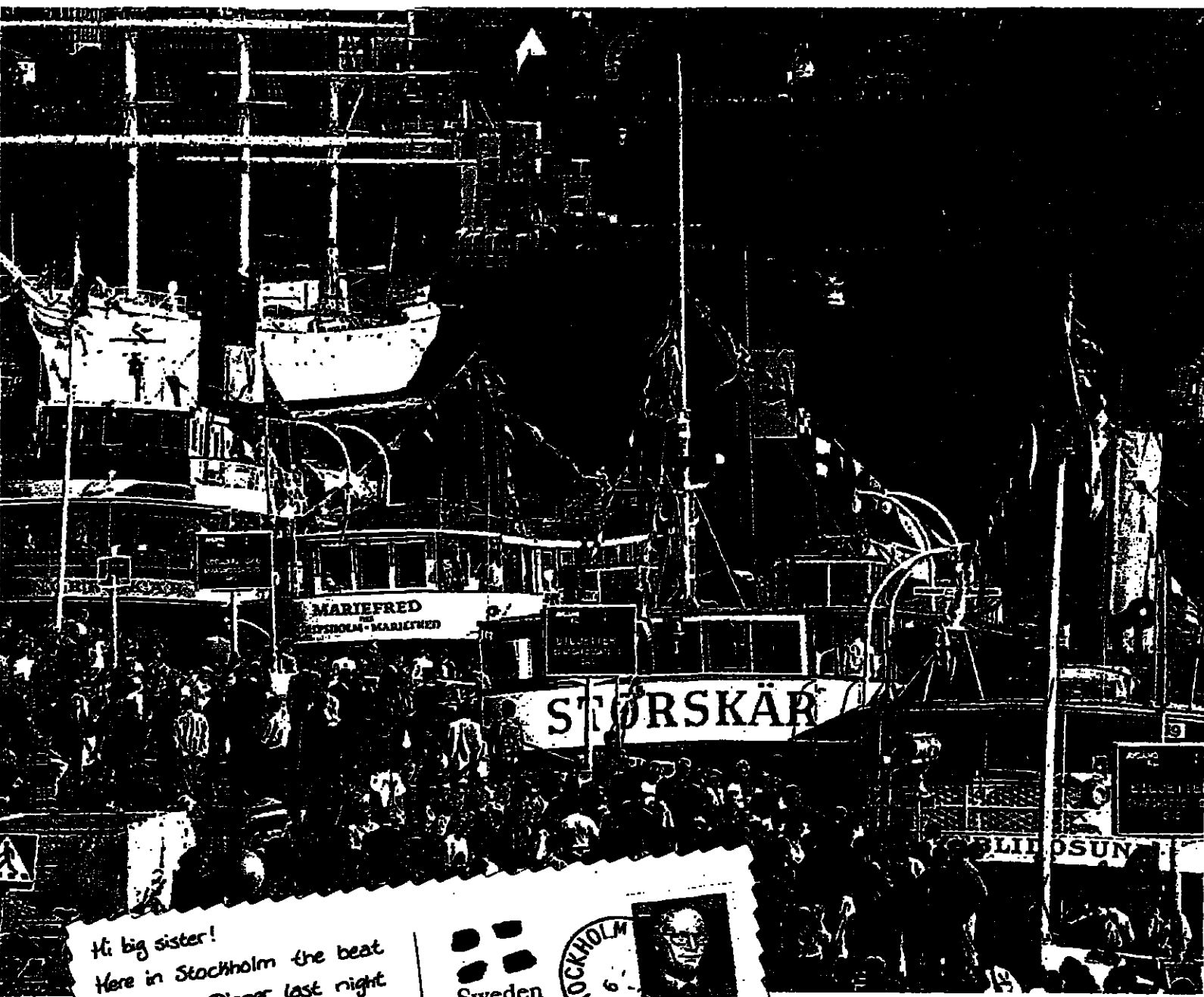
■ The journey from Lisbon to Sintra takes 45 minutes by car. The train leaves from the Rossio station in Lisbon (£1.48 return) and takes about an hour. Sintra's station is 15 minutes' walk from Sintra-Vila centre.

■ In southern Portugal — Lisbon to the Algarve — the weather is hot from May to November (20C upwards) and remarkably mild the rest of the year. In the high season (June-Sept) booking is strongly recommended.

■ To travel with Portugal: The Rough Guide (Rough Guides, £9.99) at times seems like going armed with the equivalent of a liquorice pistol (eg, the country market is on the first and third of each month, not the second and last). Nevertheless, it is the most comprehensive, practical and reliable of all those available.

■ Recommended reading: Portugal, by David J.J. Evans (Cadogan, £14.99), Lisbon, photos and text by Manfred Hamann and Werner Radassewsky (Nicolai, £14.99), The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis, by José Saramago (Harvill, £8.99).

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## Brittany: Under canvas on a luxurious site, and walking in Arthur's footsteps



The 16th-century Manoir du Cleuziou, not far from Belle-Isle-en-Terre in central Brittany, whose splendid grounds contain magnificent camping sites that are ideal for families

Remember that depressing smell of damp tent as you unrolled it on arrival at your camping site? The disappearance of those two crucial pegs so that it flapped all night in the wind? The ground with a bump under your hip and a hollow under your head? The wet that came through because the fly sheet had mysteriously disappeared since the last time you camped? And that was just the first night.

Times have changed. Now, when you tell friends you have just returned from camping with the children, and they say "Oh, great", with that half-disguised look of pity, you can keep your secret to yourself.

The tent at our Brittany campsite was already set up for us, a spacious affair with a sitting and kitchen area in front and two sleeping areas to the rear (one with two beds for the children, the other with a double bed for the parents), with a thin area between for hanging up clothes. The tent pegs were all in place. The floor was firm and flat. A proper gas stove with four rings and a grill sat reassuringly next to the fridge, with crockery, cutlery, pots, pans and corkscrew stored in units. There was even an electric light which worked. A dining table could be moved outside and set up with a sun umbrella. This was tough camping.

The Manoir du Cleuziou, not far from Belle-Isle-en-Terre on the road between Guingamp and Morlaix in central Brittany, was our choice. The camping sites in the grounds of the manor house, dating back to the 16th century, are secluded behind hedges and flowers. All the facilities of the manor — swimming pool, tennis court, billiard room, volleyball court, grassy play-area for children, shop — are available to the campers.

The sites belong either to the Manoir or to one of two camping organisations. We were with French Country Camping, which makes a point of having two "mature" couriers to look after their campers. Ours were Bill and Win, a good-humoured couple who were more like parents, always there to help out. Bill could usually be found repairing bicycles (rental was free, with helmets), preparing the ground (one mole was

## Camping for connoisseurs



Campers enjoying the swimming pool at Manoir du Cleuziou

### FACT FILE

■ French Country Camping, Canute Court, Toff Road, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0NL (01565 626260).

■ A tent at Manoir du Cleuziou for two adults and up to four children, return ferry crossing and travel pack costs £591 a week in peak summer, £329 in late August. Mobile homes and country chalets also available.

■ Ferry and Le Shuttle crossings are arranged through the leading operators. Multi-site holidays can also be arranged. There are sites in Italy, Switzerland and Spain as well as all over France. Sites are chosen for their character and tend to be small and secluded.

■ Reading: *French Ennui — Brittany*, by Patricia Fenn (Quiller, £6.95). *Everyman's Brittany* (Everyman, £16.99). *Camping Caravaning: Le guide* (Michelin, £8.50).

in residence, too) or advising on places to go or which restaurants to visit. The children took to Win instantly. Campers with the other organisations said how much they enjoyed us two organisers.

This is a holiday for families. Within about 8.6 seconds of pulling in after the drive from the ferry at Caen, five-year-old Laura had rushed up to our daughters and whisked them off to the playground. Her family, we later discovered, had postponed their trip south to stay on longer because they liked Cleuziou so much. Children adore the freedom to rush where

they want around the spacious grounds, though you may have to keep them away from the pool. The Manoir is miles out in the country and parents accustomed to constant vigilance suddenly find themselves relaxing. Another pleasure for town-dwellers being so far out in the sticks is the complete absence of light pollution at night. Hale-Boppers at Cleuziou will be in heaven at present.

Cleuziou is well signposted along pretty lanes running past farmland where cows easily outnumber people. This is Brittany off the beaten track, where you have to drive half an hour

to reach the pink granite coast. The villages are picturesque, houses yellow-stoned or whitewashed, with immaculate displays of geraniums when we visited in late August.

We were newcomers to the pleasures of Brittany. The Concorde restaurant near the church in Louargat has good food, with menus from about Fr60 to Fr100. The tiny market there provides delicious pâtés, mussels and other produce for a cook-up at the campsite. Live rabbits, ducklings and chickens were a further distraction, but not for the pot. Neighbouring Belle-Isle-en-

Terre has an unpretentious charm and is worth a visit, especially when the circus is in town. Camels and llamas were grazing on the green when we wandered past.

But the short drive to the pink granite coast, which stretches from Trégastel in the west to Bréhat in the east, yielded all kinds of pleasures. One of our favourite spots was St Michel-en-Grève, where the beach is vast and there is a gorgeous view from the churchyard with its elaborate and colourful gravestones. For those willing to drive further afield the whole of west Brittany lies ready to explore.

Back at the campsite after a day out you can eat at the snack bar by the pool and there is a crêperie in the cellar of the Manoir, but for a treat one night the restaurant is excellent. Fillet of red mullet with crispy artichoke chips, potato stuffed with crab, rabbit in a caramel sauce... this made a change from the honest fare we had cooked back at the tent. There was also a two-stage main course: *demi-canneton rôti*, where a quarter of the duck comes in a sauce made from choucroute, the local spicy spirit, followed by a crispier quarter with lettuce. The five set menus range from Fr90 to Fr225, where you leave the choice to the chef. Children can have three courses for Fr60.

Camping in this style is a relaxing way to spend a holiday and will not break the bank. We will be back, if the clamouring of small voices is anything to go by.

TIMOTHY RICE

■ The author was a guest of French Country Camping.

## In the Gallic footsteps of King Arthur

The forest of Paimpont is all that remains of the great medieval hunting forest of Brocéliande, a setting filled with folklore in the green country west of Rennes. Legend has it that Joseph of Arimathea sheltered in Brocéliande after the Crucifixion, taking with him the Holy Grail, the cup Christ drank from at the Last Supper.

The French also believe that King Arthur, Merlin, Sir Lancelot and the rest were Bretons who lived in the forest, and never came to England at all. This may seem unlikely to a true-blue Brit, but to add lustre to this claim the local people have recently enshrined their Arthurian legends in the form of a circular walk in the woods. The three-

day trek is a quest in itself, through a countryside crammed with romantically named places, like Folle Pensée and la Val Sans Retour, Merlin's Tomb, The Golden Tree and the Rock of the Goat; these names alone should make you want to go there.

The walk began, as all walks should, with a very long lunch. This was taken at the Relais de Brocéliande, a small logis by the lake at Paimpont. Seafood and crêpes and a bottle or two of local cidre-bouche did not prepare us for the walk or the sight of the hotel parrot drinking beer from a tap on the bar.

Paimpont is pretty, with a medieval abbey and a great lake and plenty of walks in the surrounding woods. Our walk

that afternoon was a rather long 13 miles, mostly on forest tracks. It might have been shorter but we got lost and saw not a sign of a knight or a fairy. Eventually we emerged from the woods and found signs to our first night stop, the Manoir de Terre, a romantic hotel on the outskirts of Paimpont.

Parts of the Manoir date back to the Middle Ages, and a recent owner was a leading light of the Breton Druids, but today the hotel attracts lovers who dine by candlelight with fingers entwined and mud-spattered walkers from the surrounding woods who sit about in their socks. There is a dog and a big log fire, a useful bar, a flock of sheep, four-poster beds and a very muddy walk to a spot in the nearby woods where the Druids used to gather.

We squelched down there after breakfast next day and learnt that the essential requirements for Druid gathering are holly, beech and chestnut trees, a rushing stream, mistletoe and a flat rock; lay on that lot and you will soon be waist-deep in Druids. All this was good colourful stuff but our quest was for King Arthur and we pressed on for the Fontaine de Barenton and another dose of Arthurian legend.

The Fontaine lies deep in the woods and, because we were once again lost, we got there in the end by following a group of French schoolchildren out for a cultural ramble. The story of Barenton concerns Merlin, King Arthur's personal wizard, who fell in love with the fairy Viviane who lived hereabouts. For reasons yet unknown she shut him in a stone by the Fontaine de Barenton



Fontaine de Barenton, where Merlin is said to be captive

where he still lurks and works his magic.

Local legend has it that if you pour water on Merlin's Stone at the Fontaine it will start to rain. Since it rains every five minutes in Brittany at the best of times this seemed a fair bet, but the snag is to find the right stone.

In the end we poured water on every stone around the Fontaine and, sure enough, it started to rain. Within five minutes it was coming down like stair-roads. It was still raining when we checked into the Auberge de la Table Ronde at Neant sur Yvel that evening and, when we went down to dinner, water was pouring across the floor of

the bar from a leak in an upstairs bathroom. Pouring water on Merlin's Stone should only be done with care. The final leg of the walk, 19 miles back to the car at Paimpont, is, frankly, something of a slog. On the other hand the scenery is superb and this day offered the finest walking of the trip, up the Valley of No Return to the castle of Lanolot du Lac at Trecesson beside rushing streams, along ridges above valleys cloaked with gorse. We managed to get lost yet again above the Val Sans Retour but were rescued by the same schoolchildren we had met the day before: they are now convinced that Folle Pensée was founded by the English.

### FACT FILE

■ Brittany Ferries (0990 360360) offers a five-day excursion fare to St Malo from £152.

■ The closest port to Paimpont is St Malo, which is served by Brittany Ferries from Portsmouth. Full details from any ABTA travel agent or from Brittany Ferries on the number above.

■ Walking holidays in Brittany can also be arranged through Inntour of Hovingham, Yorkshire (01653 628811).

■ Walkers in Brittany will need boots or stout trainers, a rainproof anorak and a small daypack. The Michelin Green Guide to Brittany, in English, explains the history and legends of Brocéliande.

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ROBIN NEILLANDS

### WORD WATCHING

Answers from page 25

VERATRUM

(c) A perennial genus of the family Veratraceae of liliaceous plants; a plant belonging to this genus, especially the white hellebore (*Veratrum album*); also a rhizome of this. From the Latin *veratrum* hellebore. "Veratrum has likewise been found useful in epilepsy, and other convulsive complaints."

WITTICASTER

(a) and (b) A petty or inferior wit, a wittling. Thus, any broadcaster or television "host". By analogy with poetaster. *Latham's Dictionary* of 1782 cites Milton: "The mention of a nobleman seems quite sufficient to arouse the spleen of one witticaster."

VASQUINE

(c) Petticoat. From the obsolete French *basquine*. Walter Scott, 1820: "I shall endure her presence without any desire to damage either her curch or vasquine." Her what, Sir Walter? Her curch is her kerchief or headscarf.

WHINNOCK

(c) The smallest pig in a litter, the runt. Perhaps from the root of *whine*. "A Cadma, the least of the Pigs which a Sow hath at one farc; it is also called the Whinnock."



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## Norfolk: The empty north coast full of pleasures; the medieval county town full of churches and pubs



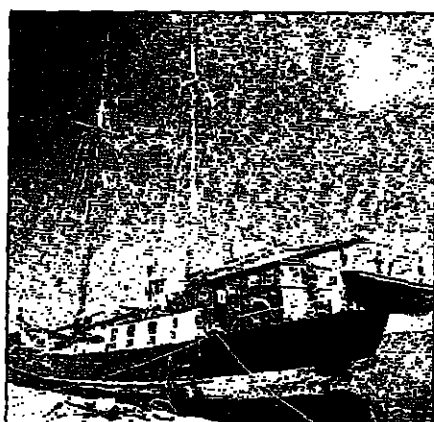
The windmill is the giveaway that you are in Norfolk, and between Cley next the Sea (above) and Burnham Market you will find almost every pleasure, from walking the wild and stunning coastline to eating, from golf to riding to watersports

# Where to live off the flat of the land

It is said that the art of taking a break lies in not breaking your neck when you take one. The surest way of returning from a break in a state of nervous collapse is to go without a plan, trusting only to serendipity, which, in my experience, inclines more to dips than serenity.

There is nowhere within a three-hour drive of London or the East Midlands that is at once so empty and yet so full as the north Norfolk coast, between Burnham Market and Cley next the Sea. Empty (comparatively) of traffic and people, full of almost every possible pleasure, from walking the wild and stunning coastline to eating; from golf to riding to sailing, from windsurfing to sightseeing. Even the most hyperactive child can be reduced by the sportier pursuits to a little pile of exhaustion.

Burnham Market, within almost a longbow-shot of the salt marshes and the sea beyond, is as good a place to start as any, a *Go-Between* village with a single road bisecting the wide village green. On either side of it the Georgian façades are unchanged, although many of them now conceal fine restaurants, food shops, galleries, bookshops,



Seafood is king at Wells-Next-The-Sea

and Mike Gurney's legendary fishmongery, with Miv Watt's stylish Fish Café above — a perfect place to lunch on oysters or *bouillabaisse*, or perfect plaice.

Bearing in mind that your first imperative will be to find a bed for the night, and a good dinner. The Hoste Arms, on the green, offers you the choice of a spacious four-poster or cozy chintz bedrooms (all en suite, and all supplied with walking maps). It has five attractive eating areas and almost as many

ethnic cuisines, including traditional English which you can enjoy unpastorised and unpolluted.

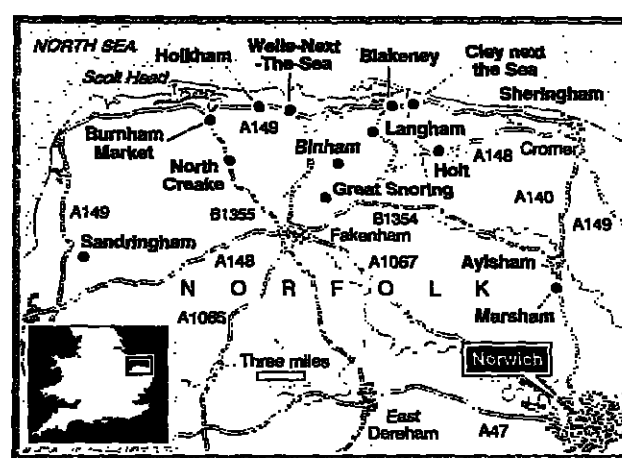
On Sunday mornings, and at night, the bar is a "local", not only for the occasional Royal and their guests from nearby Sandringham, but for more beautiful faces per square foot than anywhere else in Norfolk. If, on the other hand, you would prefer the quiet of a rural farmhouse, and a B&B that far transcends those modest initials, then at North Creak, just slightly

### NORTH NORFOLK COAST FACT FILE

■ The Hoste Arms, Burnham Market, Norfolk PE31 8LD (01328 738 777, fax 01328 730 105); three-course dinner about £20 a head, including wine. Weekend break (two nights) £76-£84 per person, with breakfast. Single room with shower, £110. Low-season midweek breaks available.

■ Bed and breakfast at the Bretingham-Smiths, Gleebe Farmhouse, Wells Road, North Creak, Fakenham NR21 9LD (01328 730133, fax 01328 730 444; en suite double room £40 a night, attic double £32 a night. Also recommended: The Old Rectory, West Beckham, Nr Holt NR25 6NZ (01263 824394) £20 per head. Fine supper £15.

■ Gurney's Fish Café, Market Place, Burnham Market (01328 738967); bring your own wine, no corkage charge, £10-£15. Yetman's Restaurant, Norwich Road, Holt (01263 713320); av £30-35 per head incl wine, closed Tues. The Moorings (Bernard & Carla Phillips), Freeman Street, Wells-Next-The-Sea (01328 710 949); av £30 incl wine. Ring for opening times.



inland from Burnham Market, you will find the gentle and civilised Jeremy Bretingham-Smith and his wife Mary McCarthy (daughter of the Old Bloomsburyite Desmond MacCarthy) and herself one of the leading stencillers in the country. Delights of their farmhouse include either an enchantingly decorated double room *en suite*, or an almost equally enchanting attic bedroom, just as sweet, but not quite so *en* — the bathroom is two paces down the corridor. Breakfast (as late and as

leisurely as you like) is a serious, home-made event, served with as much solitude or conversation as you like. I'd plump for the conversation if I were you; by the time she sweeps you out with the crumbs, Mary will have arranged for you to rent a sailing dinghy, a horse, a bicycle or a sand yacht, or booked you on a boat trip to see the seals at Scott Head, while drawing you a framework map of how to get to the endless beach at Holkham or to the wild bird sanctuary between

Blakeney and Cley next the Sea. If lazing among little shops better suits the tenor of your break, then the little town of Holt is a Domingo aria for the acquisitive (though very quiet on Sundays). This narrow-laned Georgian spidertown in the web of north Norfolk offers everything from stylish clothes (The Warehouse) to three floors of secondhand and antiquarian books (Tristram Hall).

Did I hear "Lunch"? The choices are as endless as the pubs that

spring out in the nick of time from the sides of tiny roads or village greens, and such prandial pleasures could be followed by an afternoon's wandering among the endless ancient churches along the coast (Binham Priory, Cley and Blakeney churches are particularly memorable), or among the grounds and garden centre of Holkham Hall, seat of the Earl of Leicester.

At night, when your taste buds flower, you can treat them to the finest food at Yetman's of Holt, or at Bernard & Carla Phillips, The Moorings at Wells-Next-The-Sea, or let them blossom among unhurried curries at the Taste of India, also in Holt, before slipping quietly through Great Snoring on your way back to bed.

Let no one tell you that Norfolk is flat. It rises from climax to climax while keeping in perfect tune with you, whatever your mood and however sharp your mind may be. You prefer hills and dales? The skies at sunset are as beautiful and mountainous and as snow-capped as the Alps, and are guaranteed to break nothing more substantial than your heart.

SIMON GOUGH



The spire of St George's in Norwich, where there used to be a church for every Sunday

## Hi-tech wizardry takes a pew

Once upon a time, Norwich could boast a church for every Sunday and a church for every day. This was reason enough for the annual fortnight rearing about on boats on the Norfolk Broads to be tempered with a few days ashore to explore the most complete medieval city in England.

The city skyline is peppered with spires; but although the pubs are as full as ever, the same cannot be said of the churches. That is to say, they are not full with the faithful petitioning the Lord with prayer. Many of the buildings are now redundant but some have found other uses.

One of the most imaginative is at the former St Michael Coslany, a church whose fine inlaid flint, typical of the region, has been compared to the ivorywork of old cabinets. The building has been given over to Inspire, part of the Science Project Federation, an educational charity, which has transformed it into a hands-on science centre. Where once were pews there is now all manner of high-tech wizardry guaranteed to occupy the most curious of young minds.

Norwich is easily negotiable on foot and this is the best way to discover its architectural gems, hidden down winding, cobbled streets. The jewel in the city's ecclesiastical crown is the cathedral, a place of immense beauty and serenity. It is made of pale Caen stone from Normandy, and is a soaring testament to Norman building skills.

Inside are many treasures. Its chapels are rich with ornaments and paintings; and a reliquary arch (in which, until the Reformation, relics of the saints were kept) now houses a glittering array of

### FACT FILE

■ The author was a guest of the Hotel Norwich (01603 787260). Dinner, B&B from £32.50 per person.

■ Norwich Area Tourist Agency (01603 763062) has a free holiday guide containing details of discounted courtesy breaks.

■ Other places to visit: the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, has sculptures and paintings from around the world. The building, designed by Sir Norman Foster, has won several awards. Open Tuesday-Sunday (01603 592467). Norfolk Rural Life Museum & Union Farm, Gressenhall. Award-winning museum with working farm. (01362 860563). Thirly Hall Wildlife Gardens, Ely, Great Yarmouth, has rare animals from Asia in landscaped grounds with pattern garden and crocodiles in the swamp house (01493 369477).

■ The Norfolk and Norwich Festival takes place in October.

silver chalices and communion plate on loan from the diocese's churches.

One of the cathedral's more intriguing artefacts is the Saxon bishop's throne behind the high altar. A recess directly underneath probably once contained relics whose essence, it was believed, could rise up through the "flue" and give the bishop seated above some divine assistance. Until

the Reformation the cathedral was the home of Benedictine monks. The monks' door leads directly from the cathedral into expansive cloisters. In the dappled sunshine, these are a haven of tranquillity in a bustling city.

When it came to building, the Normans thought big. Norwich Castle, an impressive stone keep built as a Norman garrison, is now the largest and finest of the many local museums. It houses the Colman Collection of works by the Norwich School of artists, the world's largest collection of British ceramic teapots, and a fascinating geology gallery with a complete ichthyosaur and a limestone slab with a dinosaur's footprint.

Strongly recommended is the guided tour of the battlements, for glorious aerial views of the city (not for the vertigo sufferer; but, if you do go, take binoculars), and the dungeons, which have the full panoply: whipping posts, thumbscrews and a ducking chair (popular with the children in the party).

There is also a gruesome display of the death masks, tufts of hair and all, of those who swung from the gallows on nearby Castle Green; and only nervous laughter met the guide's disclosure that what were once the condemned cells are now the women's lavatories.

The entrance ticket to the castle includes admission to the adjacent Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum, which is reached through the former prisoners' tunnel, now a realistic reconstruction of a First World War communications trench.

Norwich is no great distance from the coast, and the coun-

ty's northern shores have several pleasant Victorian seaside towns. So we drove north in the morning sunshine through what is known as "the Garden of Norfolk". It was here that the last man was hanged in England for sheep-stealing.

Our destination was Langham and its glassmaking factory, although the complex of 18th-century red-roofed flint barns give it more of a cottage industry feel. Here was something quite different: to look down from a viewing gallery as the master glassmaker, who provided a running commentary, blew, teased and fashioned glistening crystal creations of exquisite beauty from molten globules.

After lunch in the rustic, beamed restaurant — and an

energetic spell (for the children, that is) in the adventure playground in the walled gardens surrounding the complex — we took the coast road east to Sheringham. The town is home to the North Norfolk Steam Railway, a full-size affair which meanders to Holt through countryside designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

On our return to Sheringham we allowed ourselves a bracing walk along the sea-shore cliffs, until the lengthening shadows of the setting sun sent us back to Norwich and the creature comforts of our hotel. There we had time for a leisurely dip in the pool before dinner.

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■ **MOOR RAMBLING:** the walking specialist Moorland Rover (01998 760523) offers six-day walking breaks on Dartmoor

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and Exmoor from April 28 to May 2 for £349. The trip, taking in Tarka country and the north Devon coast, and covering ten miles a day, is led by guides from the Devon Wildlife Trust. Half-board accommodation is included in the price.

■ **SUNDAY TEE:** the four-star Five Lakes Hotel, Golf and Country Club (01621 868888), near Maldon, Essex, offers golfers a Sunday Driver break for £85, including two 18-hole rounds on Sunday and Monday morning, Sunday night dinner, and accommodation, breakfast and use of the hotel's other leisure

facilities. The offer, based on two people sharing a double/twin room, is available until December 22.

■ **LUXURY PADDLE:** Heritage Touring (01305 266440) offers a weekend break in the four-star Thornbury Castle hotel near Bristol on May 3 for £329, including a trip down the Bristol Channel aboard the *Waverley*, a restored paddle steamer. The *Waverley* will join a flotilla accompanying the *Matthew*, a replica of the ship skippered by John Cabot which is repeating his voyage of 500 years ago to discover Newfoundland. The price includes two nights' hotel accommodation with dinner, breakfast, and buffet on the *Waverley*.







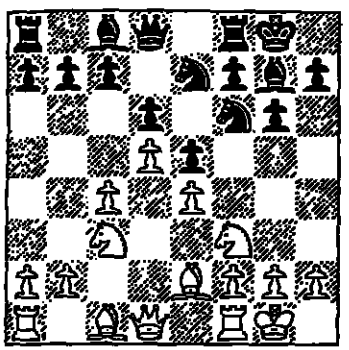
## CHESS

by Raymond Keene

I OFTEN hear the complaint that chess is rendered unnecessarily difficult by the proliferation of modern opening theory. If you do not know the theory of the openings and face a player who is well-prepared you may find yourself playing the middlegame with one hand tied behind your back.

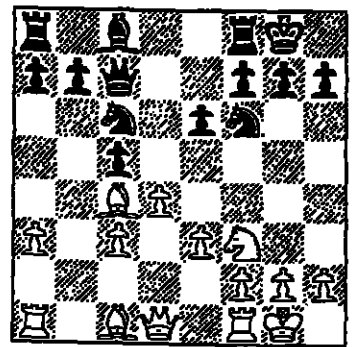
Bobby Fischer's innovation, Fischerandom, was designed specifically to combat this problem. In Fischerandom the starting order of the pieces is shuffled randomly, with both sides adhering to the piece array which is thus selected. At a stroke opening theory is abolished. However, a drawback is that several pieces may end up on quite inappropriate squares.

An interesting alternative has been suggested to me, namely that enthusiasts might play from specific opening positions in which development. There is a precedent for this. Arabic players of a thousand years ago established "Tabiyas", or fixed opening positions, which they quickly set up on the board with little thought as to move order or subtleties of sequence. This week, therefore, I intend to propose three modern Tabiyas in which you can try your hand with either colour.

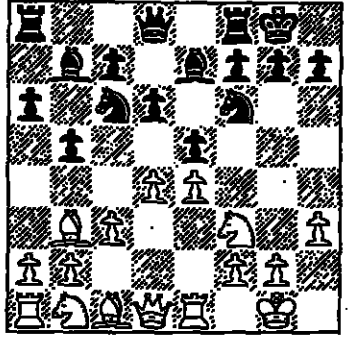
Tabiya 1  
King's Indian Defence  
White to move

This follows 1 d4 Nf6 2 e4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e5 Nf5 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e7 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7. White's plan is to attack on the queenside, with moves such as b4 and c5 and quite often Ne1-d3. Black will counter on the king's flank, moving the king's knight either to h5, e8 or d7. This frees the black king's pawn army for a general mobilisation, based

on ...f5, ...f4, ...g5 and ...g4.

Tabiya 2  
Nimzo-Indian Defence  
White to move

This is reached by 1 d4 Nf6 2 e4 e5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bb3 c5 6 Nf3 d5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 a3 Bxc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 Bxc4 Qc7. White's plan is to drop his c4-bishop back to a2 or d3 and then advance in the centre with moves such as e4 and d5. Black's various counter-measures include an instant central counter-punch starting ...e5 or the fianchetto (flank) development of his remaining bishop with ...b6 followed by ...Bb7.

Tabiya 3, Ruy Lopez  
Black to move

This is reached by 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bb7 10 d4. Black will consider moves such as ...b6, ...Re8 and ...Bb8 to shore up the centre and the kingside. White has several aggressive ideas: a counter at Black's queenside based on a4, perhaps, or closing the centre and chasing off Black's queen's knight with d5.

I would be pleased to hear of readers' experiences from these pattern positions.

## WINNING MOVE

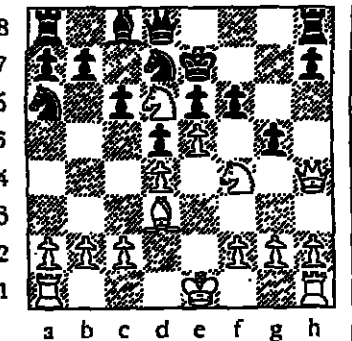
By Raymond Keene

White to play. This position is from the game Speyer - Couvee, Holland 1902.

The black king has already been forced to move, and now his pawn cover has become loosened. How did White now make him swiftly regret these deficiencies? Send your answer on a postcard to *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The first correct answer drawn on Thursday will win a year's subscription to the *Stamton Society*, which includes a free invitation to the annual dinner at Simpson's-in-the-Strand. The answer will be published next Saturday.

Last week's solution: 1 Qg8+

Last week's winner: E M Nowell, Guildford, Surrey.



## No 1060

## ACROSS

- 3 Spinal column segment (8)
- 7 Desert illusion (6)
- 8 Not sympathetic (6)
- 9 Attractively old-fashioned (6)
- 10 Way to get 17: card game (6)
- 11 Ribbon: type of window (4)
- 13 Artificial human (Jew. legend) (5)
- 15 Get higher (4)
- 17 To the other side (6)
- 18 Work for seven players (6)
- 19 NY river: Mrs. Holmes's landlady (6)
- 20 Straight manage (6)
- 21 Tiny details (8)

## DOWN

- 1 S. Am. mammal, its wool (6)
- 2 An outcast (6)
- 3 Giddy feeling (7)
- 4 Temper outburst (7)
- 5 Port on heel of Italy (8)
- 6 Right to be heard (8)
- 11 Angels (8)
- 12 Richard Brinsley, dramatist (8)
- 13 Not have enough (2,5)
- 14 One programme in series (7)
- 15 Prince -, 17C admiral: - Bear (6)
- 16 Quick drawing (6)

## SOLUTION TO NO 1059

ACROSS: 5 Exempt 7 Unable 9 Ricochet 11 Pant 12 Coper 13 Rebuttle 15 Bistre 17 Growl 19 Dine 20 Glisters 22 De luxe 23 Porter

DOWN: 1 Metric 2 Inch 3 Subtle 4 Sent 6 Exceptional 8 Black Forest 10 Corot 14 Bogus 16 Regret 18 Losers 19 Dodo 21 Impi

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## PUNCHLINE

READERS are invited to write an amusing caption for the cartoon (right), from *The Strand Magazine* (reproduced from Westminster Libraries, Sherlock Holmes Collection, Marylebone Library).

The cartoon will be printed again next week with a caption from those submitted.

Send caption suggestions on a postcard with your name and address to: Strand Caption 46, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN.

The Editor's decision is final. The closing date for entries is Wednesday, April 9.



"The master says you can only stay one night Mr Merchant, then you must move on"

The winning caption for last week's cartoon (above) was submitted by A. Smith of Higher Tranmere, Birkenhead

## WORD WATCHING

By Philip Howard

## VERATRUM

- a. The tip of a ploughshare
- b. A true cave
- c. A sort of tily

## WITTICASTER

- a. A witty broadcaster
- b. A feeble wit
- c. A perennial purple shrub

## VASQUINE

- a. A heifer
- b. A little jug
- c. A petticoat

## WHINNOCK

- a. Gorse
- b. A dropscone
- c. A runt

Answers on page 21

## COMPUTER GAMES AND PASTIMES

by Tim Wapshott



Micro Machines V3 allows up to eight players to compete against one another

IN *Micro Machines V3*, Codemasters has once again reinvented the wheel to deliver a timeless classic. Racing along three-dimensional courses now gives the gaming magnificent depth, equalled only by its beautiful designs and witty atmospheric sound effects.

Codemasters released its 8-bit *Micro Machines* on an unsuspecting world in 1990. The tiny racing machines had to dodge unlikely obstacles in the everyday settings of the courses - like breakfast tables, cluttered workshop surfaces, science labs and school desks. What soon placed the title head and shoulders above other racing games was an unheard-of ability to accommodate up to eight players on a single console.

For the next five years Codemasters stayed with 8-bit then 16-bit formats for a clutch of quality sequels, including *Micro Machines 2*, *Micro Machines 96* and, just before Christmas, *Micro Machines Military*. If there are any regrets for the V3 it is that it marks the end of the era for the lesser consoles, since *Micro Machines V3* has been completely reworked to make the most of Sony PlayStation's 32-bit capabilities.

The results are stupefying. The flat, overhead racing action has been replaced by swooping and zooming camera coverage adding great impetus. Vehicles don't just fall off surfaces, they plunge into Axminster carpet ravines. In the restaurant setting, the cars dodge wine bottles and cutlery to the sounds of unseen mumbbling diners and the tinkering of the lounge pianist turning out a continuous melody of elevator tunes.

Most of the settings are effectively miniature works of art. The mesmerising garden courses, for instance, show off glassy ponds reflecting sunny skies and banks inhabited by jumping frogs and buzzing dragonflies.

Here the action is set to a sublime garden cacophony of birdsong and noisy but realistic frog ribbits. V3 serves up 30 vehicles to race, with campervans among those added to the more familiar line-up of power boats, hovercraft, sports cars, tanks, trucks and so on.

Hidden weaponry lurking along the courses, includes power-ups, force-fields, fireballs and the new scorpion-like grabber claws, to snatch the vehicle ahead and hurl it further back in the line-up. I could do without some of the gimmicks. There are fewer player characters to choose from (Jethro, Dwayne, Spider, Cherry et al) but those remaining are fully rounded, puffed-up figures who trade insults before the start of a race - except Spider, who had laryngitis in my

version. His lips moved but nothing came out. However, the title does boast Codemasters' superlative, almost trademark, multi-player options. Up to four can race on one PlayStation (or eight with two linked consoles), with two people sharing one controller. Racing options include single events, tournaments, head-to-head, time trials and chases. As well as the 50 or so racing circuits, there is also a tutorial Driving School for first-timers.

Codemasters must be congratulated for never resting on its laurels. *Micro Machines V3* will be one of the year's most successful console games, if not the best-selling PlayStation title of 1997. If you have not yet entered Cyberspace Thirty-One there is still time - but you will have to be quick as the deadline is first post on Tuesday, April 8. The star prize is a luxury weekend in Rome fit for an Emperor, courtesy of GT Interactive. Our lucky winner plus a guest will be flown to Rome and met at the airport to be whisked off to the city's five-star Grand Hotel, your home for the next three nights.

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## BRIDGE

by Robert Sheehan

FROM time to time I am asked which is better, the weak INT or the strong INT opening. "Nature, red in tooth and claw" will usually ensure the most efficient method survives and becomes dominant when different methods are in competition. For example, Culbertson's original 1930s system, with its high standards for an opening bid, is now extinct. Similarly, the Strong Two opening bid has all but disappeared, replaced by the Acol Two and the Weak Two. In its turn the Acol Two is something of an endangered species in the tournament world, as players switch to the Weak Two.

Nothing of this sort has happened with the weak and strong No trump openings: they have co-existed for 50 years. Hence the test of competition doesn't seem to have detected any marked overall difference in performance between the methods. It seems likely that their advantages and disadvantages balance out.

So what are the main pros and cons? I will consider 12-14 as the range for the weak No-trump, and 15-17 for the strong No-trump. The case for the strong No-trump. 1. The most important gain is that many 15-17 point hands are awkward for the weak No-trump, e.g.

\* Q432♥J863♦AK4♠AQ.

Playing a weak No-trump your choice is to open One Heart - unsatisfactory, as you are bidding a poor suit with a good hand - or One Diamond on a three-card suit, also not ideal. Take away the king of diamonds and the strong No-trumps open One Heart - not a problem on a weak hand.

Even if you have a four-card

minor and a four-card major, you can have difficulties with the weak No-trump. Say the opener has hearts and clubs and 16 points, and the sequence starts 1C-1H. How high should opener raise?

2. The strong No-trump gives away fewer penalties.

3. It gains on 15-17 point hands where weak No-trumpers have to start 1X - INT.

(i) Marginal games (e.g. 17 opposite 8 or 9) will always be played by the big hand, a definite advantage. There is no compensating gain for the weak No-trumpers: when the points are distributed say 13 opposite 12, it doesn't matter who the declarer is.

(ii) Weak No-trumpers will not reach game with 16 opposite 9: after 1X-INT, the opener will pass.

The case for the weak No-trump: 1. The least informative, and hence best, sequence to 3NT is INT-3NT. That leaves the defence in the dark as to what to lead. It occurs more often with a weak No-trump - a 12-14 point hand is dealt about twice as often as one with 15-17 points.

2. INT has a good preemptive effect - it is often difficult for the opposition to get together if their strength is evenly split. In practice disastrous penalties don't seem to occur very often.

3. When a weak No-trumper opens one of a suit, his partner knows he has shape or extra strength.

These latter points persuade me to play a weak No-trump throughout at duplicate. However, at rubber bridge, I find losing even an occasional 1,000 penalty too dispiriting, so I prefer weak not vulnerable and strong vulnerable.

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## THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

## No 3404: Memorable Occasion by Monk

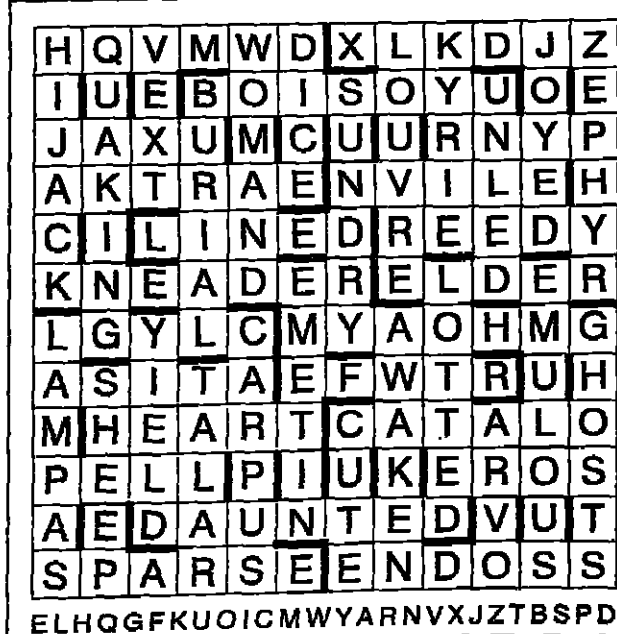
AN AUTHOR and a novel (both spelt as in ODQ4) run clockwise in peripheral squares. Every clue comprises a normal definition and a subsidiary indication which gives the defined light to be entered plus one extra letter, appended either before or after the light. In the cyclic order in which the clues are presented, but not starting at 9 across, the extra letters spell out a message concerning several clues. 24 down is in the OED, and *Chambers* (1993) contains all other necessary information, including the components of a two-word light.

## ACROSS

- 9 What might move small ones to reach out and about, grabbing anything very small?
- 11 Odd job around east wing of adequate crumbling country house?
- 12 Affected with fear in historic journey round about centre of Leeds.
- 13 Wife has forgotten Germans.
- 14 Mildew roiling one lost mignonette in the Grampians.
- 15 Exercised wickedness surrounded by squaddie renegades with traces regularly removed.
- 16 Spenser's their heartless shocker.
- 18 Supercilious contemptible person's mostly regularly accommodated.
- 20 Bitter, salty, worn-out.
- 22 Spurious cause of wear on the toilet?
- 23 Following a type of cat around the continent gives abnormally-dry hair condition.
- 25 A god's endless element?
- 26 Supplies deaths.
- 30 Bill in Dublin is in common role as a poet.
- 32 Old firm heroes reportedly split by edges of stage.
- 33 Victim of a psychosis of one without the ego?
- 35 Dried ginger root, for instance, needs perennial plants.
- 40 It's a shame it's a non-rigorous function.
- 41 Disentangle knotted annular piece of string.
- 42 Search thoroughly for mark of the Beast in a huzz.
- 43 Reward without a passage.
- 44 Dunkirk's true invasion (see earlier).
- 45 A particular speed of a ring, but not one in engines.
- 46 Query: "What might make a connection, catching front of pullover?"

## DOWN

- 1 Exert strength jumping up round a tree.
- 2 Ghostly headless US state's university (not Ohio).
- 3 What is unusually common to slaughterer and stallholder?
- 4 One deer on Ecstasy broke down.
- 5 What would make one so itchy with signs of hard scaly skin?
- 6 A bone from a bird swallowed in mounting confusion in parts.
- 7 Locally, one invalid without a type of base of an overgrowth.
- 8 Be contained by outskirts of Ullapool at end of week one there?
- 10 Violent cause of quarrel showing no sign of gratitude.
- 14 Seeks to gain wife over Jack's bit of fluff?
- 17 Slanting cut first seen in pollarded ebony, fir, larch, ash and aspen?
- 19 Some Africans use it (heroin) after heading for Tanzania.
- 21 Glasgow Herald's supplement's right-of-centre section in 32.
- 22 Indirect reverse index in a dictionary.
- 24 Abandoned pursuit opening with last upset.
- 25 Deaths of old took effect, buried in trench for the most part.
- 27 Lost unledged hawk on byways (every second)?
- 28 Chapter in a story on centre of reused round old coins.
- 29 What floats and can barely be seen in a service station in London.
- 31 Has heartless *Pagliacci* not included her?
- 32 Rush about and be cordial.
- 34 Roman woman (old dear) seen around first of September and parts of November and December in the Middle East?
- 36 A sequence in succession, neither beginning nor ending.
- 37 Almost seating restless beings.
- 38 Question leaders of kids' fashion about hair styled as a crop.
- 39 Man appearing on quiz regularly makes female cross.

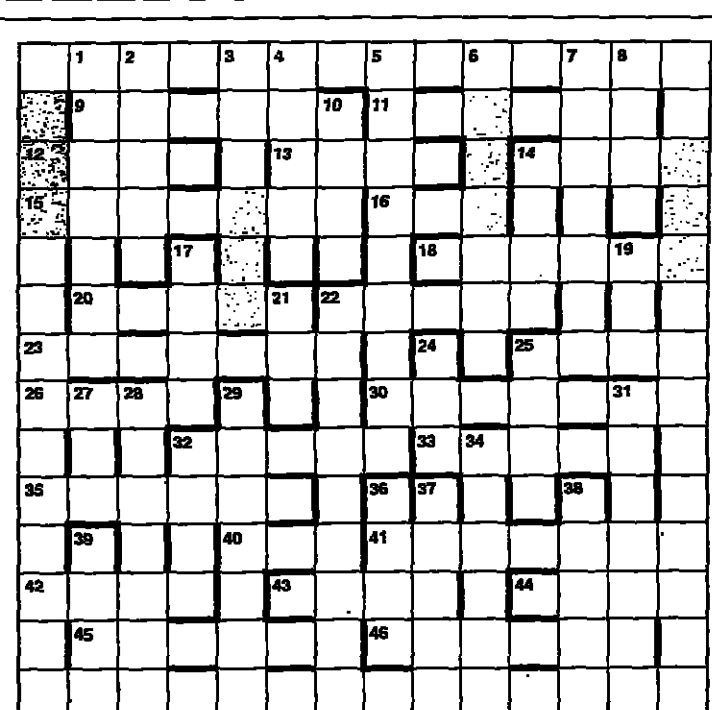
Solution to No 3401  
Enigma Variation by Swan

ACROSS: 1. bantam; 6. siesta; 11. blanket; 14. ludo; 15. hawk; 16. proxy; 17. parry; 25. actin; 28. abatis; 31. jills; 34. legit.

The winner is: C. Rossington of North Hykeham, Lincoln.

The five runners-up are: M. Harrington of Warrminster, Wiltshire; B. Nuttall of Crawley, West Sussex; G. Aspin of Swindon, Wiltshire; Roy Abrey of Epsom, Surrey; M. Arnold of Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

Statistics relating to 1996 crosswords, including personal record, are now available to senders of an SAE (from overseas stamp exempt) at least 220mmx100mm to J.E. Green, c/o 63 Green Lane, St Albans, Herts AL3 6HE. It would be helpful if applications could be kept separately from current puzzle submissions.





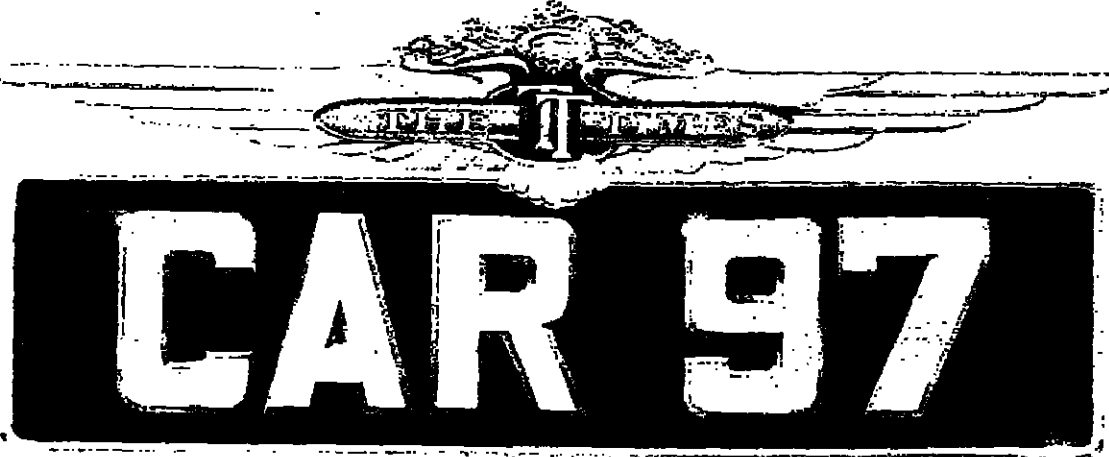






A taste of life with the fast girls at Brands

Page 5



The car that takes the strain of quick braking

Page 10



SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

# Bespoke Bentley that's a brute

Would you do this to a shiny new limo?

Ian Morton drives with the Italian who did

In Crewe, they scarcely believed it. They had gone to all that trouble over fine lines and facets to make a big car look powerfully compact yet graciously poised. They had lavished upon it coachwork of unrivalled quality and had sculpted a wood and leather interior in the finest English tradition. They called the result the Bentley Continental R, and they were charging a mere £193,428 for it.

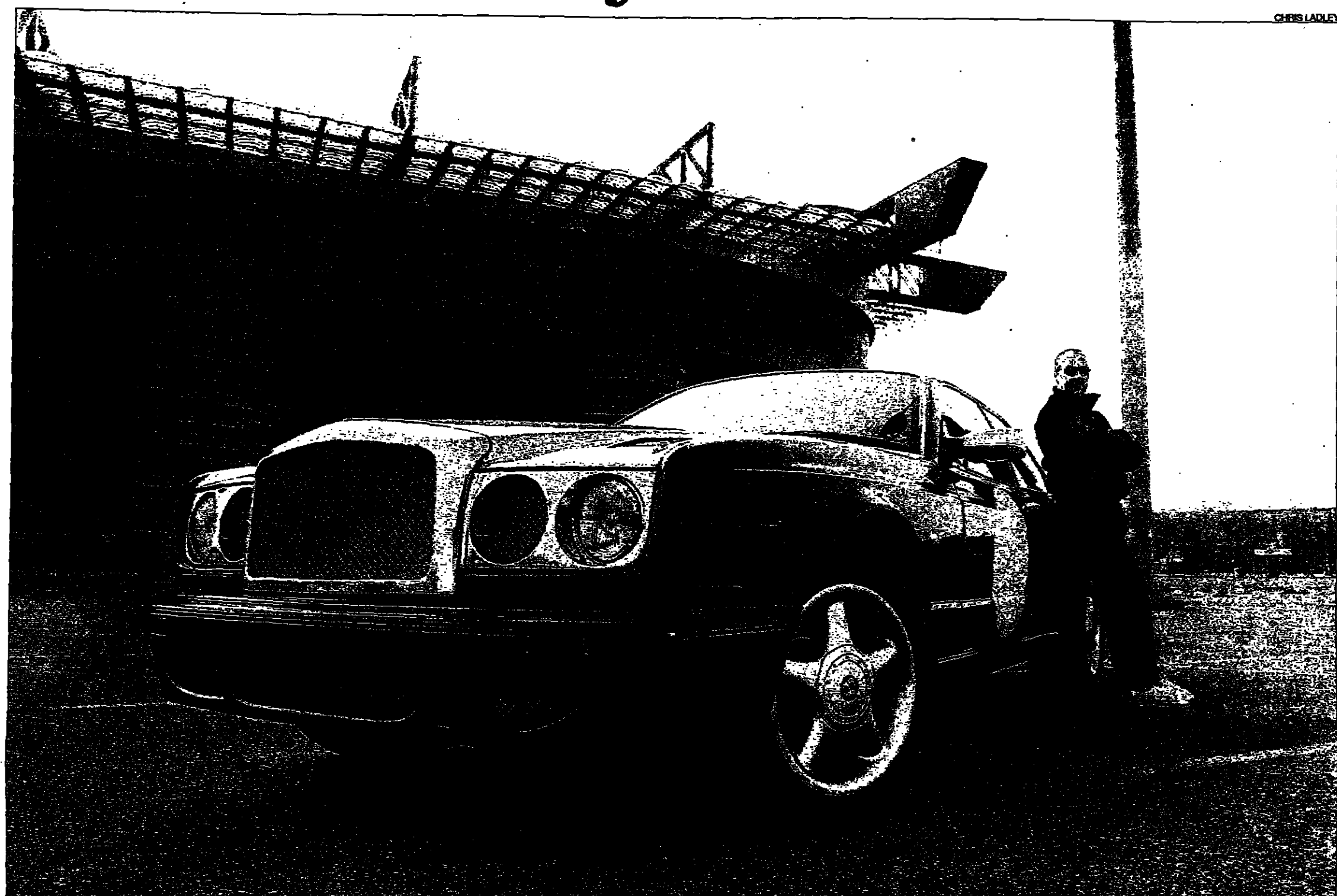
Then along came this fellow from Milan who wanted almost everything modified, with a great brutal metal and wire mesh face on the front, the rear seats removed, the trim stripped out and replaced with machined aluminium and leather quilting, and the engine enlarged to seven litres. And lots more — over 50 features were to be radically changed. And when they told him it would more than double the price, he shrugged and said, "OK."

It was their own fault. Rolls-Royce and Bentley have taken to inviting customers to request individual treatment on their cars, and have an extensive department, Mulliner Park Ward, to carry out special work. But work this special was unheard of.

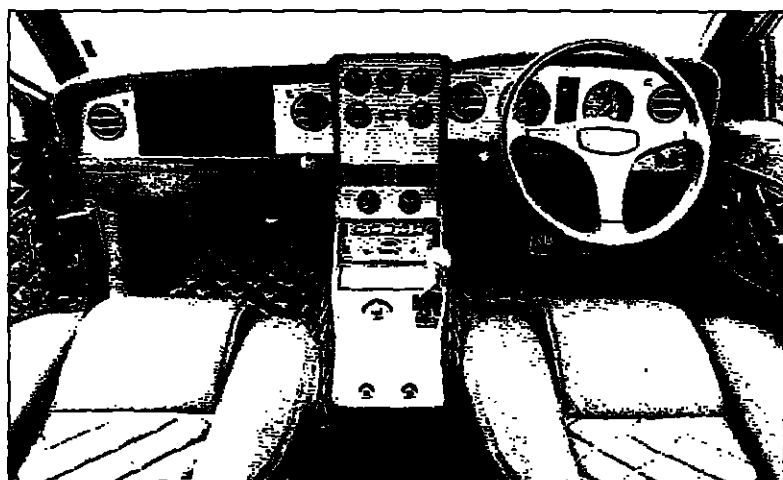
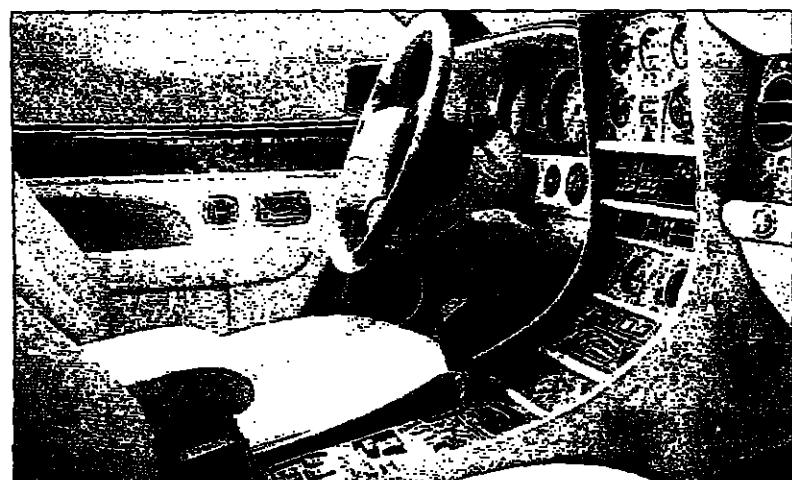
He had his own way, of course. Carlo Talamo is not only their best customer in the whole of Italy, but the man in whose hands their fortunes in that country effectively rest. So the car he wanted, the one they call the Bespoke Sports Bentley, is a reality — about £500,000 worth of reality, the most extensively customised Bentley ever.

And the company has grown proud of it, calling it a "high-performance, light-weight road-and-track derivation of the Continental R with prominent Bentley sporting tradition, visual features and styling cues". Yes, plenty of those, though in sheer performance terms the car seems at first to provide a graphic illustration of the law of diminishing returns. All that work, all that expense, and on paper, the Bespoke looks only modestly quicker than the model on which it is based. The Continental R shows 0-60mph in just over six seconds, for example, while the Bespoke pulls the time down to 5.4. The standard car is credited with 151mph, while the Bespoke hauls 160. Useful, but worth all that money?

The power emerges in real traffic. The enlarged V8 unit, Cosworth-prepared with new camshaft and turbocharger and tuned to take super-unleaded petrol, develops 670lb of torque at only 800rpm (the standard engine gives 553 at 2,000), and delivers 425bhp over the original's 385 via a seamless automatic box.



Proud owner Carlo Talamo with his Bespoke Sports Bentley. The beefed-up engine and weight savings make for awesome acceleration — a good thing, because Talamo plans to let his mother drive it



Just a trim: out went the traditional sculpted wood of the original Continental R, left, and in came machined aluminium and quilted leather

Much of the expense has been incurred by weight-shedding, and the car is 240kg lighter than the R. That is like not having the fattest of those three tenors in the back.

The resultant ability of the Bespoke to respond to a bit of free road-space has to be experienced. Where the factory model takes about 3.5 seconds to surge from 50 to 70mph, the Bespoke needs little over two, the process accompanied by a great rising chord of exhaust wall fit to fill a cathedral. You are thrust

into your seat and you stay there, a helpless captive, until the accelerator lifts.

Come the curves and the lateral forces are equally assertive, for the road-holding is monumental. The racing harnesses which have replaced normal seat belts are no conceit. Nor is the huge leather-clad roll-cage which replaces the rear seats.

The creaking of the roll-cage's leather against the leather of the thickly padded roof lining is the loudest and most persistent sound. "I

could stop that by using leather cream, but I like it," says Talamo. "It is the sound of a living car."

Other oblique attitudes surface. Though it will live in Italy, the car is right-hand drive. "If my business goes wrong and I have to sell it, that will be easier in England or Japan," he explains. There are no airbags. "With the harnesses, you don't need them, but there are too many rules anyway — let me die in my car if I want to."

And the suspension is softer

than standard, so that the body cants through bends. "I like body roll — roll is natural," says Carlo. "Cars ride flat and suddenly they quit. Roll gives you more signals."

The softer ride pays off over Milan's tram lines, which is handy because the Bespoke will be daily transport. Not that it is unwieldy in close traffic. After a few minutes of familiarisation, I had no hesitation going for rush-hour gaps let alone seizing opportunities on the autostrada.

I was encouraged by the

sharp reactions of the keen Italian drivers, plus their obvious respect for a very special motor car.

"It is like driving a boat," says Talamo. "Your mother could drive it." His mother will, he says. Signora Talamo is 74 and has lost her licence three times for speeding. He is proud of his mother and his cars. A true son of Italy.

His cars. Definitely plural. He has more than 50, mainly British, including "six or seven" Minis, four AC Cobras,

Continued on page 2

## BUILDING A BESPOKE BENTLEY

■ TAKE ONE 6.7-litre Continental R (list price £193,428) and modify as follows.

■ EXTERIOR: flare front and rear wheel arches, shorten sill strips. Remove bonnet and replace with polished, ducted aluminium. Remove chromed radiator shell and replace with aluminium. Install mesh grille, blank off inner headlamps, and cover with mesh, upgrade other lamps, blank off direction indicators. Replace headlamp surrounds and door mirror caps with polished aluminium. Delete all bumper brightwork, mount flush direction indicators, apply mesh to lower apertures. Install Aston Martin-style aluminium filler cap. Fit 18-inch five-spoke wheels with low-profile Goodyear tyres. Finish in Milano Green with white racing decals.

■ INTERIOR: remove rear seats and all rear comfort items, refit area in black diamond-quilted leather, install leather-covered roll-cage. Replace front seats with manually adjusted seats. Remove door trim, carpets, rear console, and driver's armrest, and install black diamond-quilted leather on doors and black quilted overfett on floors. Install oak door-capping and waist-rail to achieve continuous "bath-tub" effect. Remove standard fascia, install engine-turned aluminium panels, revise all switches. Transfer lock, window, and boot latch controls to driver's door only. Replace standard gearshift with aluminium cranked stem and knob. Remove airbags, install three-spoke steering wheel, remove tilt-steering facility. Install drilled stainless-steel pedals. Remove fuel tank, install 18-gallon racing-spec fuel cell. Remove spare wheel, reposition battery.

■ MECHANICAL: Enlarge V8 engine capacity to seven litres with new camshaft, new turbocharger, revised cylinder heads. Install ram-air intake, extra cooling. Tune for super unleaded 98-octane fuel. Install traction-control system and high-performance brakes. Remove cruise control. Modify exhaust system with no main catalyst and twin tail pipes.

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Modern cars are more reliable — which means we can rely on them to break down because we neglect the little amount of maintenance they need

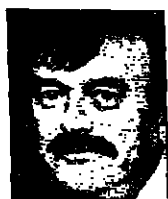
## To travel in hope is not to arrive

More reliable cars mean more breakdowns: now there is a paradox to start us thinking. But there is no other logical explanation for the fact that the motoring organisations were as busy as ever over the Easter weekend. Manufacturers sell heavily on reliability, so why is that chap standing at the side of the road with steam coming out of his radiator (and his ears)?

The answer is that cars may change, but people don't. We put more faith than we like to admit in machines, in spite of the second law of natural physics: if it can go wrong, it will go wrong. Although the British are inclined towards pessimism, we make a touching exception for cars.

We believe that a vehicle that has taken us from, say, Chiswick

### DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

to Wembley every day of our working year will cheerfully chug from Chiswick to Penzance and back in a weekend at speeds ranging from the untaxing 70mph of motorways to the taxing crawl of holiday jams.

Part of the problem is the

sophistication of the machine itself. It must be at least ten years since I did anything in the engine compartment more difficult than changing a fan belt. Lift the bonnet of most modern cars and we might as well be looking at the propulsion unit of a Boeing 747.

Sealed-for-life batteries mean that we ignore them completely, forgetting that the battery may be all right but the terminals can be altogether a different matter (smear them with petroleum jelly, or even Vaseline, when you buy the car and you won't regret it).

Indeed a survey sent to me by the RAC shows that in 1996, more than 10 per cent of call-outs involved either a flat or a faulty battery. That means that 325,000 drivers had to summon the RAC because of battery problems. This is a case where developments in

technology have worked for us and against us.

Modern batteries are better than they once were but they give little warning before packing up. Any sluggishness in starting usually means the battery needs replacing. And sealed for life means sealed for the battery's life, not the driver's. A battery lives for three

years and after that both it and its owner are on borrowed time.

Water? The advent of header tanks means that we no longer have to open the radiator itself. In fact the last time I had to do that was in Saudi Arabia, nearly 20 years ago: the cap came off with such force that it knocked a dent in the underside of the bonnet.

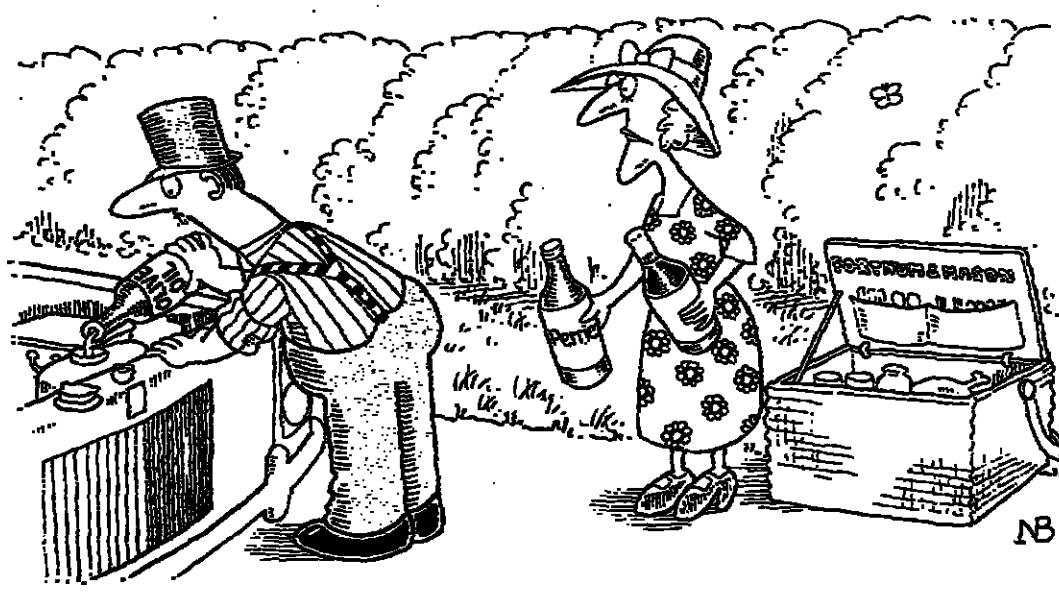
That fearsome prospect is long gone, yet any AA or RAC patrol will tell you that the first time some of the Easter travellers thought about water was when it had turned to steam and was obscuring their vision. "The funny thing is," one AA man told me, "people will have umpteen bottles of water inside the car in hot weather but

they haven't considered giving the engine any."

Tyres? The standard advice is to check them at least once a week and before every long journey, but who does that? No, nor me. Large capacity fuel tanks and highly efficient engines mean that drivers spend less time at petrol stations, where we are most likely to check oil and water levels and tyre pressures.

Another interesting aspect of the RAC survey is that alternator, carburettor and starter motor problems came fourth, fifth and sixth in the causes of breakdowns. I am not sure what to make of this: either these cars are not serviced often enough, or the service does not always cover these items. I have no idea exactly what a 10,000-mile service on my car covers and I doubt that many of us do.

But I ought to know. The bottom line here is that engine-management systems and generally more sophisticated cars ought not to be treated as if they are infallible or as if they will bite us if we touch them. This summer, nobody with a serious and unavoidable breakdown wants to wait several hours for help because 50 people who haven't attended to the basics are being sorted out elsewhere.



## One less cylinder — that's the Corsa Sting

Stuart Birch enjoyed finding that good Vauxhalls come in threes

Just turn the ignition key, drive a few yards and you will know that the Vauxhall Corsa Sting is not like most other cars.

The distinctive beat, beat, beat from beneath its bonnet raps out the message: there are only three cylinders. As speed rises it sounds almost like a turbine. It is unobtrusive and surprisingly smooth.

For those who reckon value for money includes at least a four-cylinder engine, the fact that Vauxhall has had the temerity to lop off a cylinder might cause a fit of apoplexy — but it works. It is designed to save money and reduce pollution, and Vauxhall believes it is very much how small cars' engines should be.

The well-equipped Corsa Sting goes on sale on May 2 and is expected to be priced at about the level of the four-cylinder Corsa 1.2 litre, £8,000 — £10,000.

With 973cc and four valves per cylinder, it produces a modest 55bhp but that is enough to get the Corsa to 93mph, although reaching that takes some time. But each gallon of fuel should take the Corsa an average of almost 50 miles.

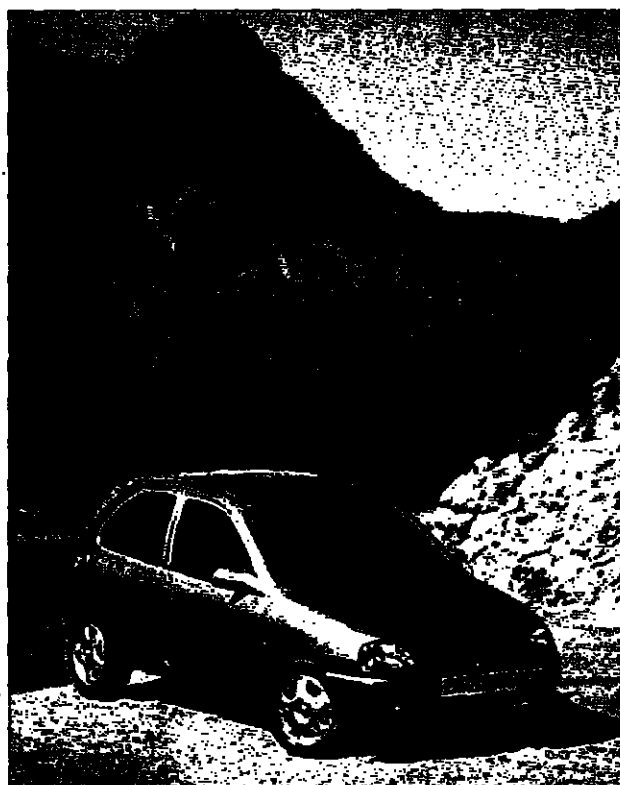
The reasons for giving the Corsa Sting only three cylinders centre on the pursuit of economy via mechanical efficiency. Three cylinders instead of four means less friction, less weight and more response at low engine speeds.

Just losing a cylinder, though, was not enough to achieve a really meaningful gain in efficiency. Developed in General Motors Europe's German Technical Centre (Vauxhall is part of GM) the engine's list of technology highlights is long. Its hydraulic tappets are said to be the smallest ever developed for a production car engine. And its fuel injection is a sequential type, producing fine jets of fuel and air to aid both economy and cleaner emissions.

"Smart" electronics help the engine start more quickly, which is another fuel saver. The engine is carefully balanced to reduce vibration.

All this advanced technology may sound impressive, but typical Corsa owners are unlikely to be interested; they will just know that the engine is not "normal". Won't they be a little wary? Nick Reilly, Vauxhall's chairman and managing director, believes they have no need to be: "A three-cylinder engine is obviously very different. But achieving low fuel consumption and emissions is very important to us and the new engine gives big advantages in these areas."

So that's the technology and how Vauxhall's boss regards the new power unit. But converting advanced automotive engineering theory into every day practice for the school run or 100 miles on the motorway may be something



else. General Motors Europe could have presented the new engine in Holland — all flat roads and smooth surfaces. Instead it chose Tenerife, all mountain roads, hairpin bends and bumps.

I took the little Corsa Sting on a punishing drive from sea level into the lava strewn landscape of Teide National Park and up to the observatory perched more than 7,000 feet up the mountains.

The Corsa is no Hale-Bopp comet, but it moved onward and upward manfully, its little

engine revving hard for miles in second and third gears. Winding its way down to sea level again, it coped very well with tortuous mountain roads.

Lexus has worked to improve the suspension of all the latest Corssas and handling is good. On the motorway it cruised happily at 75mph.

The car I tried was also fitted with Vauxhall's new optional electric power steering. It has been designed to take the effort out of steering

### STING STATISTICS

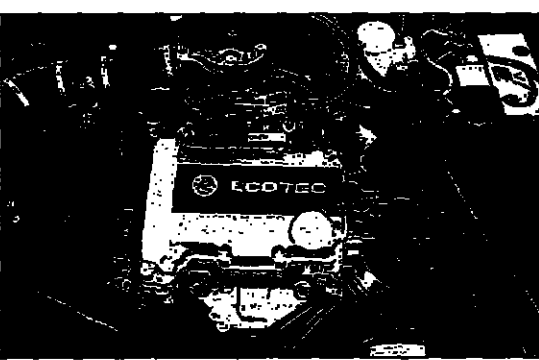
**Engine:** Three-cylinder, 973cc, 55bhp.

**Performance:** Top speed 93mph, 0-62mph in 18 seconds.

**Fuel consumption:** Urban 37.2mpg; extra-urban 58.3mpg; combined 48.7mpg.

**Equipment:** Three-spoke alloy wheels, radio/cassette, metallic paint, sunroof.

**Price:** To be announced.



Balanced triple engine is unobtrusive and miserly

without demanding too much engine power. Fitted with an electronic control unit, it only takes power when needed, which saves fuel.

The three-cylinder Corsa Sting also benefits from revisions that are applied across the Corsa range, including front and rear styling changes, improved ride and handling, and the option of air conditioning on some models.

The range also now includes a new 120mph 1.6-litre sport model. The Corsa Sting's three-cylinder engine was first re-

vealed in General Motors Europe's MAXX concept car at the 1995 Geneva motorshow. Now it is a production reality. Variations on the theme are expected and the three cylinder is a modular design which could form the basis of a larger capacity four cylinder.

Although many companies have researched three-cylinder engine designs, until now Daihatsu has been one of the few makers to put them into production cars. Now Vauxhall has joined them. Others are likely to follow.

## 'What would W. O. Bentley make now, I asked myself'

Continued from page 1

a bevy of Morgans, and his ultimate choice for twisty mountain roads, a Caterham Super Seven. And Bentleys — a yellow Azure, a vermilion Brooklands, and a black Continental R.

He hardly needed another. But to comprehend the Bespoke, you must understand the man. A self-confessed "crazy and desperate guy", he comes from a wealthy family whose money evaporated when he was ten, but he had already developed a love of classy British vehicles.

"My head was full of engines, nothing but engines," he says. "If they ever set up a hospital to treat engine-dependency, I shall be their first patient."

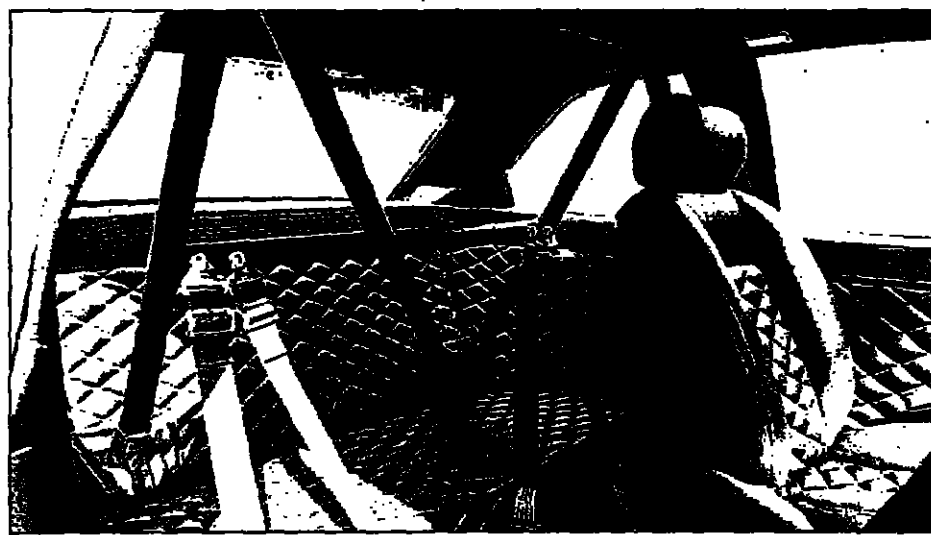
In 1984, aged 25, he capitalised on his enthusiasm and some motorbike-racing success and persuaded Harley-Davidson to let him become their Italian importer — no great deal, it might have seemed, for the previous year they had sold precisely three bikes in Italy. Now, thanks to Carlo, there are 24,000 Harleys in the country. Later, he

added Triumph, and now sells 600 a year. Today his bike firm, *Numero Uno*, accounts for a third of all big-bike sales in Italy.

Then he persuaded Rolls-Royce and Bentley that he was their best bet in a previously dull region — again only three sales in a year — and in its first year, his new firm, *Gialloquaranta* (it means Yellow 40) shifted 33, mainly Bentleys. Carlo thinks Italy will take 100 cars a year. Crewe is not inclined to doubt him. No wonder he gets his own way.

He works for it. "I live cars and bikes 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he says. "And sometimes longer than that. I have no family, no villa, no servants. I live in an hotel next to my showrooms. I have been buying cars as a drug. I have been buying happiness. Cars are everything. Cars are passion," he declares.

"I asked myself what W. O. Bentley would make now, and so I did this car. It is a toy, a Mini-Cooper for rich guys. The factory was shy of it, and still is, I think. They



Roll-over replaces rear seats; weight saved equals the heaviest of the three tenors

treated me like a crazy guy at first, but as the car started to say, "This is good."

"They are crazy too, a crazy factory which exists outside the rules. But I wanted to demonstrate my confidence in the factory. We need to keep this factory alive."

So will the Bespoke remain unique? Conscious that he is a Bentley dealer as well as an enthusiast, Carlo has declined his right to exclusivity, and given the factory permission to produce other Bespoke

Sports Bentleys. It may well happen. An English fan of the marque who spotted the car during construction instantly offered £100,000 over cost.

And last week, a distinguished visitor who had heard of Carlo's car turned up at the Milan showroom — none other than the Sultan of Brunei, the world's richest man and Crewe's most ardent collector of his cars. He asked to see the Bespoke. It would be unusual if His Serene Highness did not add one to his legendary hoard.

Carlo's imagination, meanwhile, has still some way to run. "I am trying to persuade the factory to take an initiative and build a shorter, wider, lower, two-seater version of the Azure with more power and a tougher name," he says. "We would call it the Blue Train Bentley after the famous Wolf Barnato car. It might appeal to maybe ten guys worldwide."

He would certainly be one of them. I dubbed him the Sultan of Milan. He liked the sound of that.

## The future of the small car.

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### AA GRIDLOCK GUIDE

**● LONDON**  
A406 Upper Edmonton; major roadworks on Angel Road (North Circular Road).  
A306 Hammersmith Bridge closed both ways.  
A2400 Bloomsbury; work on Upper Woburn Place and the east side of Tavistock Square.  
A5 Kilburn High Road reduced to one lane both ways, with no right turn into Beistze Road.  
M4 Junction 2 and A4; weekend and overnight closures.  
M1 Junction 2; major roadworks.  
A3 Kingston Bypass; Northbound lane closure between Shannon Corner (A259) and Coombe Lane Junction (A238).  
A307 Kingston upon Thames; off-peak single alternate traffic on Richmond Road.  
A232 Wallington; roadworks on Croydon Road.

**● SOUTH-EAST**  
M40 Junctions 1a-3; contraflow.  
A130 Sandown; roadworks on Southend Road.  
M27 Junctions 8-10; contraflow.  
A31 Ringwood; contraflow.  
A41 Watford; lane closed eastbound.  
M20 Junction 4 West Malling; roadworks, and slip-road lane closures.  
M25 Junctions 8-10; restrictions and lane closures both ways.  
A272 Haywards Heath; temporary lights, long delays.  
**● SOUTH-WEST**  
M5 Junctions 18-19; contraflow.  
A30 north of Bodmin; contraflow.  
A35 Christchurch Bypass; lane closure.  
M5 Junction 13; only one lane open.  
A40 Cheltenham; temporary lights.  
A417 Barnwood Bypass; contraflow in place between the Zoons Court and C&G Roundabouts.  
A37 near Shepton Mallet; temporary lights.

**● MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA**  
A1 Alconbury; only one lane northbound.  
A6 Lockington; temporary lights between M1 and Sawley Island.  
A18 near Broughton; roadworks at Briggale Lodge Roundabout.  
A1064 Acle Way Bridge; maintenance work.  
A41; temporary lights at Stamford Bridge.  
A500 Stoke area; contraflow.  
A5 west of M1 Junction 12; roadworks.  
A41 Wolverhampton; temporary lights on Bilston Road.  
B4109 Coventry; temporary

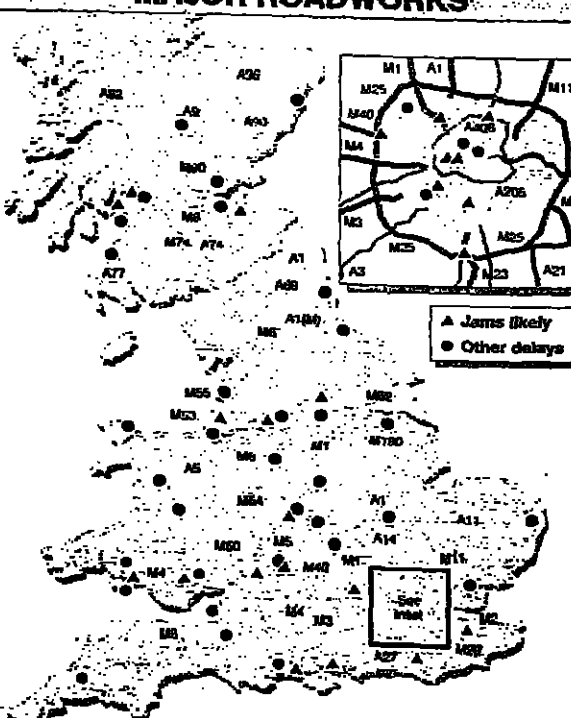
lights on Stoney Stanton Road.  
M6 Junction 6; slip road from Salford Circus to the M6 north closed. Diversions.

**● NORTH**  
A62 Hollinwood; one lane northbound. Major evening delays expected.  
A627 Bardley; roadworks. A585 near M55 Junction 3; roadworks on Fleetwood Road.  
M53 Junction 2; bridge maintenance work. Only one lane open each way on Moreton spur.  
A567 Boleby; closed northbound between Merton Road and The Strand.  
A19 Middlesbrough; lane closures weekends and overnight.  
A1058 Newcastle; lane closures on the Cradwell Bypass at the cornerhouse junction.  
M1 Junction 47; lane closures and speed restrictions.  
M1 Junction 42; narrow lanes both ways.

**● WALES**  
A48 Carmarthen; temporary lights and lane restrictions on Penam roundabout (A484).  
A494; Drws-y-Nant, Rhylfyrmain. Temporary lights.  
A5025 City Dulas; one-way system, width and weight limits.  
A4077 Gilwern Viaduct closed both ways.  
A44 between Llangurig and Elledfda Gurig; temporary lights.  
A463 Fabian Way; lane closures both ways.  
A4067 Mumbles Road; major roadworks.  
A463 Forest-fach; lane closures both ways on Carmarthen Road.  
A472 Pontypool; contraflow between Pontymole and the Heron Roundabout.

**Scotland**  
A96 Bridge of Don; only two lanes available in peak periods.  
M8 Junction 2; major roadworks, with lane closures.  
A923 Dunfermline; roadworks on Bothwell Street at Saint Leonards Street.  
A8 Port Glasgow; eastbound lane closures at Newark Roundabout.  
A710 Strath Road; contraflow between Captains Road and the A720 City Bypass.  
A78 Wemyss Bay; temporary lights on Greenock Road.  
A9 Calving; roadworks on Perth to Inverness Trunk Road.  
M8 Junction 30 (Erskine Spur) closed eastbound. Contraflow westbound.  
M898 Erskine Spur; overnight roadworks with lane closures.  
A17 south of Givran; temporary lights for roadworks at Ardmillan. Expect delays.

### MAJOR ROADWORKS



▲ Jammed likely  
● Other delays

Highways Agency Infoline 0345 504030



# Is a 35ft Mini stretching a point?

Eve-Ann Prentice talks with the back-yard builders who took Issigonis's world-famous design just that little bit far



Lindsay Haynes's 14ft-long Mini took him 4,000 hours

Lindsay Haynes is one of a breed of men who love stretch marquees. Now, after a long, long haul, spending 18 months creating a radically elongated version of the car originally famed for its small size, his customised Mini is being billed as one of the big attractions at a motor show in Birmingham this summer.

The 14ft-long Mini, with leather and walnut trim, took him 4,000 hours to build, at the same time as he was holding down a full-time job. He limited himself to just four to five hours' sleep a night while his obsessive mission was underway.

So why has Haynes gone to such lengths to transform a car which is normally perfectly happy at 10ft long? "Because people know I am interested in cars that are not quite normal, a chap in the pub suggested I make a stretch Mini," he says. "There have always been Minis in my family, but I thought this couldn't be done. By the end of the week I had bought a couple of Minis for £200 and started cutting the bodies up to make the front from one and the rear end from another."

The final result sparked such interest in the Mini fraternity that the National Lottery contacted him to ask whether he could make it even longer for its television advertisement for scratchcards. He couldn't.

The point was that Haynes's pride and joy is a pampered car which has had masses of luxury touches lavished on it, while the lottery people wanted a 35-foot model which merely looked convincing on the outside — and would be ready within two weeks of the request.

"There was big money involved, but there was no way I could do that in such a short time and eventually they had one built elsewhere," he says.

Elsewhere transpired to be Wimbledon, where a model-making company came up with the purple, neon-lit version which is used to illustrate one of the more bizarre uses to which a £50,000 win on a scratchcard could be put.

The organisers of the Mini World International motor show, at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, say they hope that this stretch

Mini will also be put on show on July 5 and 6.

Haynes, 26, from Groby, near Leicester, began his project after a relationship with a girlfriend ended "and I needed something to occupy me". So no one had to wait in the wings while he spent almost every free moment working on the car and just snatching meals when he could. He is now engaged to someone else.

"The hardest aspect of making the car was to get it to look right looking down the side of the car. The Mini is built of curves, you have one big curve from the front to the back. It took a lot of painstaking work, using a very delicate high-speed cutting tool, an air saw."

"I was slicing slivers and welding them in place. Compared with the sides, the roof was easy," he says.

The cost of materials to build the stretch-Mini was about £10,000, but it is now believed to be worth around £50,000.

Haynes says he now uses the car to raise money for a children's charity, partly by selling advertising space on the car's elongated exterior.

The scratchcard Mini, meanwhile, cost about £15,000 to build, according to Frank Farman, one of the two partners at Eagle Models in Wimbledon who made it. "We also used two Minis for the front and rear, but then we used fibreglass for the middle and installed windows and sun-roof. It was all done in about three weeks," he says. "It has a standard Mini engine — but it is a pain to steer."

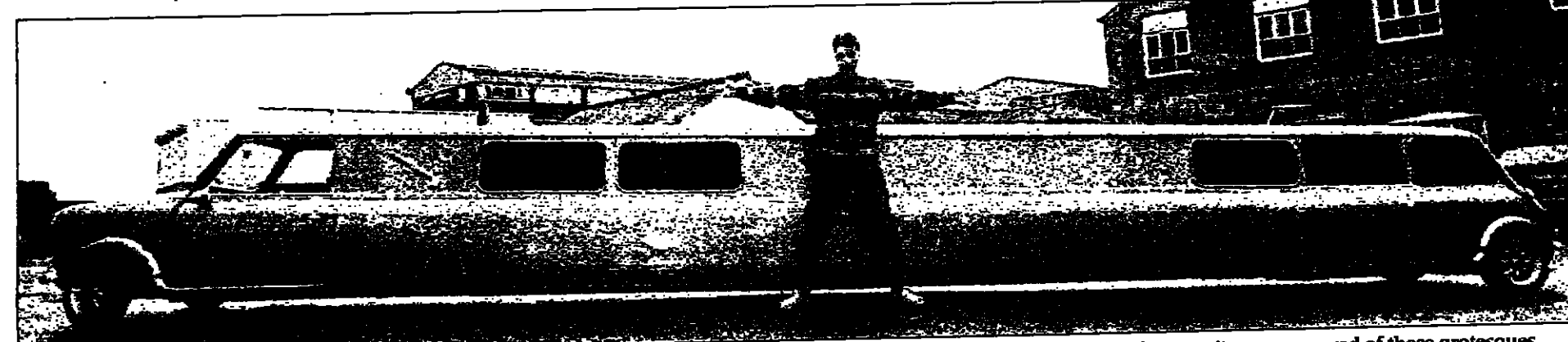
Mini-enthusiasts have mixed feelings about the elongation of their favourite vehicle. Monty Watkins of *MiniWorld* magazine, says: "I love the idea of Lindsay Haynes doing it as a curiosity, but in general, what is the point? The Mini is about being small and economical." Watkins believes there are just five or six roadworthy stretch-Minis in Britain, and only about a dozen in the rest of the world.

"They go the other way as well," he adds, "they are called shorties and are only about five or six feet long and there are a lot more of them."

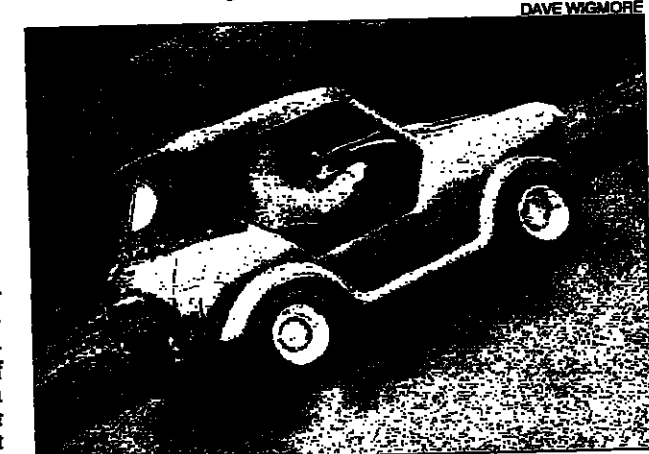
The longest stretch-limo in Britain is believed to be a new



Haynes chauffeurs his new fiancée in the Mini limousine. He decided to build it after he broke up with a previous girlfriend and needed something to do with his time



The 35ft-long scratchcard Mini was specially built in response to a request by the National Lottery organisers. But purists aren't so enamoured of these grotesques



Stunted Minis, however, are quite another thing

35-foot Lincoln Super Stretch run by Londoner Ian Berne, which can be hired for £80-£100 an hour. And the most stretched in the world is reputed to be a 65-ft long, £500,000 monster called the Ultralimo, which is based in California. It is the length of a cricket pitch, though it has

been said of this 36-seater "the difference is that you can get movement out of a cricket pitch".

Mini World International, Mike Kennington 0121-767 3536; Ian Berne Limousine Hire, 0181-500 9469.

## Hedgehog April Fool falls flat

BMW's spoof advert missed the point, says Helen Mound

It was the April Fool's trick that fell as flat as the squashed hedgehogs it mocked — the so-called "BMW that communicates with the animals".

A full-page advert placed in *The Times* on April 1 claimed that, "In children's fiction, it was Doctor Dolittle who talked to animals. Today, thanks to doctors at the Bavarian Institute of Zoology, it is the engineers at BMW." It went on to explain that BMW had developed Wild Acoustic Information Link (WAIL) that emits a warning to scare animals off the road, reducing the risk of their being injured.

But the advert was a hoax. In keeping with a decade-long BMW UK tradition it was an April Fool's joke, the only clue being the words, "Available from April 1 on selected models." Except that the joke was on BMW, as a spokeswoman for the British Hedgehog Preservation Society points out, "We've been selling these things for nearly ten years."

Being run-over is no joke for the hundreds of thousands of hedgehogs that end up flattened on Britain's roads each year. And picking dead wildlife out of the front bumper isn't much fun either. The 650 April Fools who phoned the WAIL Hotline for more information before midday on Tuesday clearly agreed. Perhaps BMW should rethink its extra equipment list after all.

Developed by Alert Industries in America, where motorists suffer horrendous



Safety hedgehogs — or jay walkers?

accidents with deer, moose and other large wildlife. Animal Alert is a wind-driven high-frequency whistle claimed to startle animals to make them run off.

It's not a lot of use if your kids want to spot wildlife from the car, but horses and other farm animals being herded on the road aren't spooked by the whistles because the manufacturers say they don't work at speeds under 35mph. Only at faster speeds are they designed to squeal at a pitch inaudible to humans — similar to a dog whistle — sending birds and animals scurrying into the hedgerow.

Attached to both corners of the car's

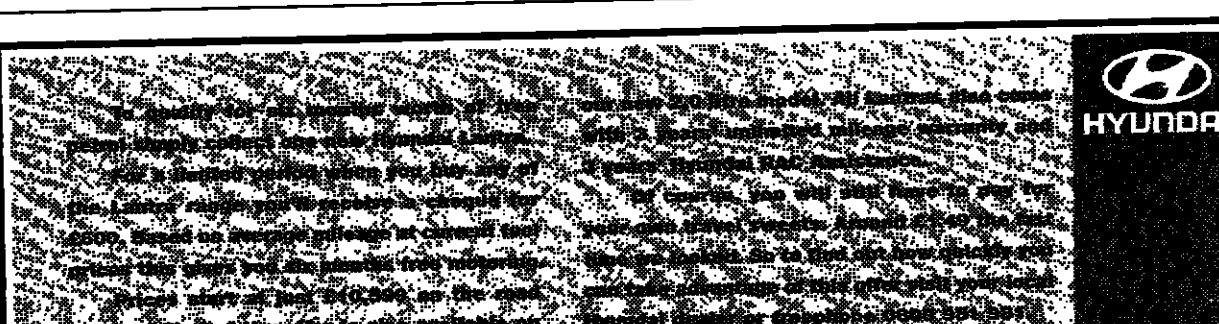
front bumper, Animal Alert whistles cost £8.99 for a pair. Delivered by post they come with fitting instructions and according to one tester, who bought a pair after his dog was run-down, they're so effective that he hasn't hit an animal in eight years.

However, following calls from riders worried about Animal Alert startling their horses, the British Horse Society carried out trials at speeds from 35mph to 60mph. They say they failed to get any response from any animal and reported a "negative" result.

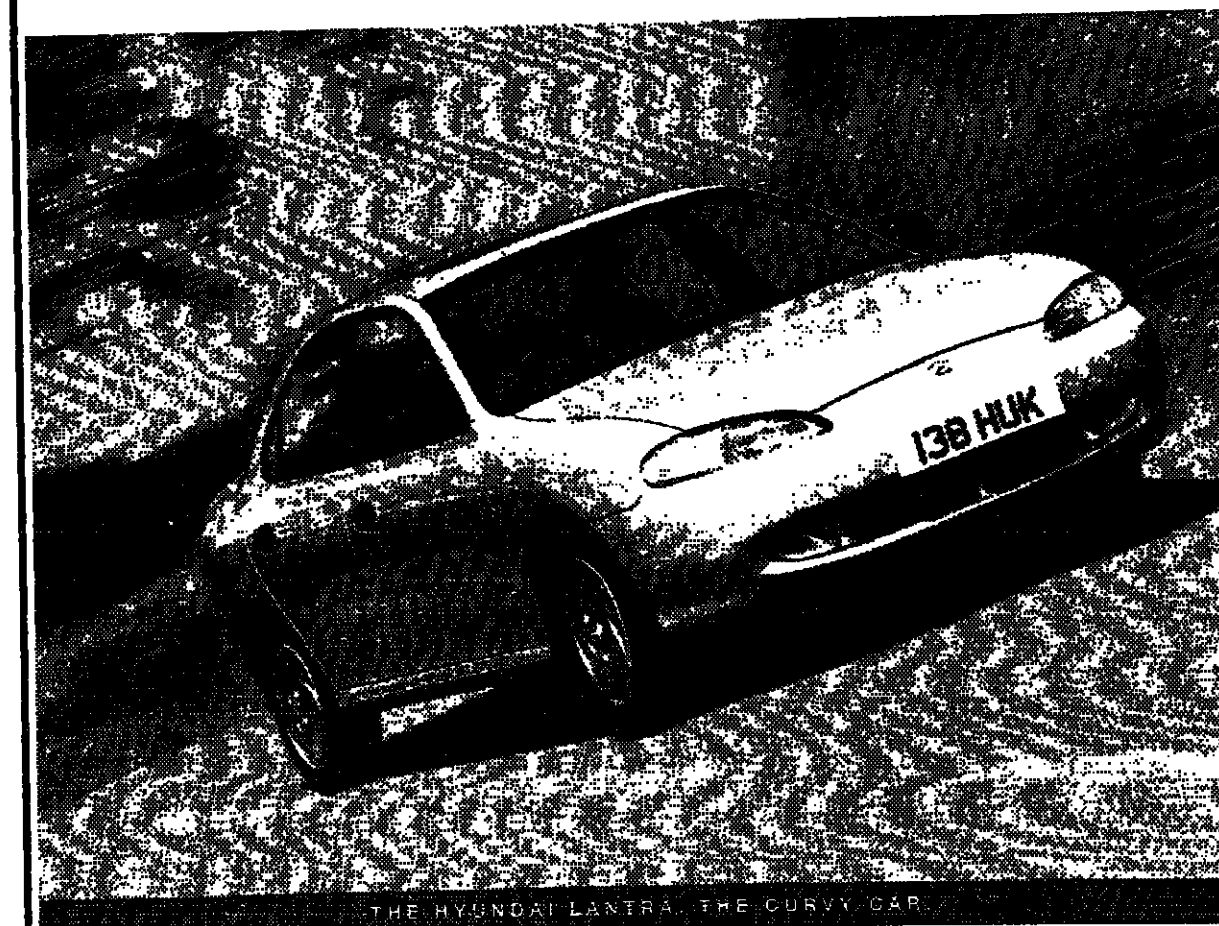
The British Field Sports Society also conducted trials and failed to get a reaction from horses or hounds, and stated: "Riders have nothing to fear from these devices. It would appear that they have absolutely no effect." But during both tests no-one saw any hedgehogs, so perhaps the whistles were working.

Squashed hedgehogs have long been the butt of motoring jokes. The British Hedgehog Preservation Society wasn't surprised by BMW's prank, but they thought it appropriate with Hedgehog Awareness Week just a month away. However, the Department of Transport was recently criticised for choosing two cartoon hedgehogs in a £500,000 road safety campaign for 11 to 12-year olds.

The characters appear on television, in cinemas and on children's videos, showing how to cross a busy road and "arrive alive" on the other side. Safety campaigners complained that the replacements to the Green Cross Code man and Tufty the Squirrel had no road sense and were poor role models. But since when have squirrels been good road-crossers?



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Hyundai Car (UK) Ltd, St John's Place, Euston Street, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1NL. Telephone 01494 428820. Model featured, Lantra 1.6 LSi, price £10,599 on the road. On the road price includes delivery, number plates and 12 months road fund licence. Price and vehicle specification correct at time of going to press. "Free Petrol" available in form of a cheque for £500.00 from the manufacturer. Calculation based on an average 6 month mileage of 5,750 miles (1997) Low Report on Motoring, average Lantra fuel consumption of 33.4mpg (Touring, What Car?, February 1997) and an assumed petrol cost of £2 per gallon. Total of £400.54 then rounded up. Alternative offers are available from Hyundai dealerships but not of equivalent value. Offer available to private buyers only and must be first registered keeper. Offer not available on vehicles purchased through Mobility schemes. Vehicle must be registered between 1.3.97 and 31.3.97.









**Demonstration drives with a difference: a specially picked team of top women racers is touring Britain's tracks to show off Spanish cars, reports Liz Turner**

I bought the Mustang American Independence in 1989. I love the colour, shape and the noise, and I hate the fact that I don't get to use it more. It's a metallic green convertible model with 210 brake horsepower V8 engine, automatic gearbox, power steering and power hood.











# Famous names lead Italy's renaissance

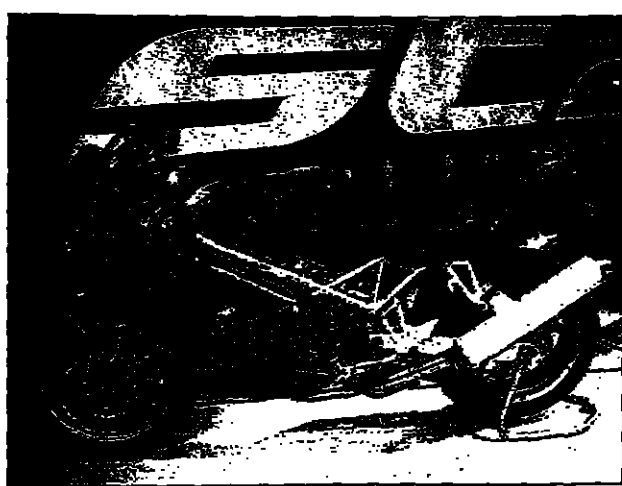
**Ducati's new sports-tourer shows Latin bikes are now back, Roland Brown says**

The world's motorcycle press has been gathering at Jerez for the launch of a new superbike. There is nothing unusual about that — Japanese manufacturers have unveiled bikes in sunny southern Spain so frequently that many journalists could act as guides at the customary viewings of sherry bodegas and dancing horses. But this launch is different: the bike is not from Japan but from Italy.

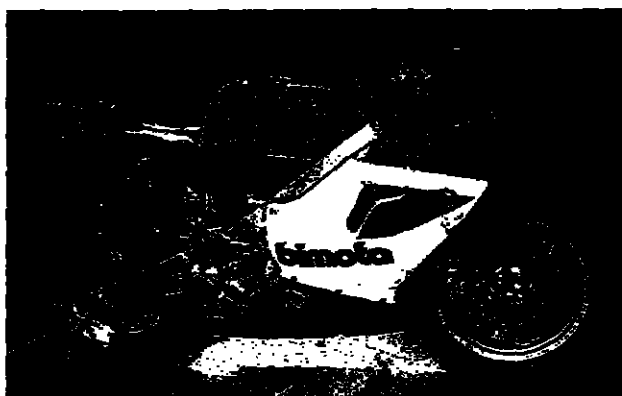
The machine is the ST2 sports-tourer, Ducati's first truly new model since the stunning 916 three years ago. And behind the Bologna firm's decision to splash out on its first launch on foreign soil is a growing confidence from not just Ducati but the whole Italian industry.

Many of two-wheeled history's great marques are Italian. Gilera, MV Augusta and Moto Guzzi were giants in the 1950s; Laverda, Ducati and Bimota made their mark more recently. But a few years ago the first two were gone and the rest were struggling, victims of Japanese success and their own problems.

Suddenly, though, the Italian industry is roaring back. Leading the charge is Moto Guzzi, once the country's largest bike firm. After going bust in 1966, Guzzi was run for two decades by car baron



**Ducati's 944cc V-twin ST2 is the first major new model to emerge from the firm's Bologna factory in three years.**



**Due for release this year, Bimota's V-Due is powered by a revolutionary clean-burning 500cc two-stroke engine**

Alejandro De Tomaso, who failed to supply the finance needed to keep Guzzi's V-twins competitive.

In 1994 De Tomaso relinquished control to a Milan-based merchant bank, which appointed bike enthusiast and

former banker Arnolfo Sacchi as the new managing director. Sacchi aims to increase the 1993 production total of 3,000 bikes to 20,000 by the year

2001. So far he is on target. Guzzi built more than 6,000 machines last year and the 1997 total will be higher — aided by new models including the striking Centauro roadster and the roadburning 1100 Sport Injection.

In contrast, Ducati's recent problem has not been lack of competitive machines — the 916 remains arguably the world's most exciting sportster

Laverda failed despite 1970s superbikes such as the Jota triple. Now the revitalised firm's new twin-cylinder range includes this 650cc Ghost



**Powerful 992cc Moto Guzzi Centauro V-twin was the first model developed by the firm's new management**

bike yet: a sleek sportster called simply the 750.

Bimota has remained in business during the last two decades, but the tiny Rimini company — famed for its exclusive, hand-assembled sports machines — has had serious problems too.

**F**ive years ago Bimota built just 500 bikes, which sold for little profit despite high prices. Since the arrival of new managing director Walter Martini in 1993, Bimota has trebled production. And it has not lost its edge: this year's most significant machine is Bimota's V-Due, powered by a "clean-burning" 500cc two-stroke engine.


Discussion of revivals should not exclude Aprilia, which in recent years has won numerous road-race world

Nor have there been serious problems to overcome at thriving Piaggio, which is by far Europe's largest producer of powered two-wheelers, albeit scooters. But Piaggio owns Gilera, one of the great names of Italian motorcycling history, and saddened many enthusiasts when it closed its ailing factory in 1993.

The Gilera name is now used only for scooters — as is that of Benelli, another marque that has won world titles, and which built a glorious six-cylinder 750cc superbike in the 1970s before going bust. Benelli reappeared in January with a 50cc scooter, amid rumours that it is developing a new 900cc superbike. Given the Italian boom such a dramatic return would not be surprising.

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Mercedes launches the car so smart you no longer need a back-seat driver, reports **Vaughan Freeman**

# E-Class swot with all the answers

## MERCEDES-BENZ E-CLASS

**Engine:** V6 18-valve 3.2-litre petrol producing 224bhp at 5600rpm through five-speed automatic transmission.  
**Performance:** Top speed 150mph, 0-60mph in less than 8 seconds.  
**Economy:** 18.3mpg in town, 37.7mpg out of town, 27.4mpg overall.  
**Equipment:** Radio, Brake Assist, anti-lock braking, airbags for driver and front-seat passenger, seatbelt pre-tensioners, side airbags, child-seat recognition (this identifies when a child seat is in the front passenger seat and disarms the airbag which might otherwise cause injury in an accident).  
**Price:** £40,000 (ESP option £846 extra).

## ROADTEST

If the new Mercedes E-Class were a schoolboy, it would be one of those clever-clogs who always does their homework, knows all the answers, and brings an apple for teacher.

Loaded with technology, the E-Class, which goes on sale this month, seems, like the classroom swot, to have most of the answers.

Strangely, it has taken Mercedes more than a century to answer one of the most basic questions posed by customers: after more than a hundred years in business, Mercedes-Benz has finally provided a radio as standard. It has also done away with that irritating piece of pocket-tearing technology, the car key. Instead, drivers get a wedge-shaped piece of technology known as the ELCODE, which uses radio and infra-red beams to chat to the car's computer brain.

ELCODE (Electronic Code System) allows owners to unlock just one door, all the doors, or doors, windows and sunroof, from a distance so that the car can be cooled down on hot days before climbing in. And it makes a serious stab at trying to put car thieves out of business.

When the wedge is inserted into the ignition slot, the car is able to interrogate it to make sure it is the right one before the engine is started. The key and car even play a high-tech version of *University Challenge*, and set each other advanced mathematical problems which must be answered correctly before the car agrees to start. All of this takes just half a second from the moment the key has been inserted into the ignition slot.

While ELCODE will do much to thwart the thief, the E-Class also features the new Brake Assist System as standard, which recognises when the driver is braking for an emergency, and applies full braking pressure to reduce braking distances by up to 45 per cent.

Brake Assist is supported by the Electronic Stability Programme, which allows drivers whose ability falls far short of their ego, to drive safely.

The ESP's on-board sensors constantly monitor the car's speed and direction; when it detects that the car is, for example, going into a corner too quickly or starting to skid, it automatically reduces power to the engine or applies the brakes to one or more wheels, overriding what the driver is doing. The system, which I tried on the ice and snow of

mountainous roads in Austria, is quite extraordinary.

Since the car does not know whether or not the driver is on a cliff edge when he is about to lose control, the system assumes the worst and kicks in abruptly. But it works incredibly well, stopping skids and slides on snow which, without ESP, would have had the car pirouetting out of control.

Head of E-Class development, Dr Bernd Harloff says: "With ESP, sensors register the speed of the wheels and the steering angle, as well as the yawing movement of the vehicle, plus lateral acceleration and brake pressure."

"A microcomputer uses this data to compute continuously

Electronic wedge replaces ignition key — and talks to the car's security system

the maximum, permissible speed for the selected driving direction, and corrects driving errors and skidding and sliding tendencies due to icy or wet conditions, loose chippings or other adverse conditions in which the driver would normally have a great deal of trouble keeping his vehicle on course."

Though the E-Class is loaded with systems and initials, the key to the car is the new 2.8-litre and 3.2-litre V6 petrol engines, which improve fuel consumption by up to 13 per cent and double the normal 9,000-mile service intervals. The platinum spark plugs (there are two to each cylinder), only need to be changed every 60,000km.

The car feels completely secure on the move, and the V6 engine, 30kg lighter than current E-Class engines, is smoothly unobtrusive and matched to the automatic transmission. It makes for relaxed motoring — even when hopelessly lost on a test drive, the ease of driving, the unfussy V6 engine and automatic gearbox combination provided a soothing antidote for escalating "where-are-we" panic.

## DR DASHBOARD

**Q** So these intelligent brakes think more quickly than a driver. What about the one behind in the banger which has just scraped its MoT?

**A** He shouldn't be driving too close. The Highway Code stopping distances are based on an average car and average driver. The average car on Britain's roads is about seven years old.

**Q** That means that most of us don't have a cat in hell's chance of stopping as quickly as an E-Class. Would my insurance company understand if I hit the back of one in an emergency stop?

**A** There's absolutely no reason why they should. The distance between cars has to be based on how long it might take the following car to stop. The stopping power of the car in front is immaterial. You need to be able to brake to a standstill even if the car in front stops dead.

**Q** But whenever I try leaving that sort of gap on the motorway someone dives into it. What should I do?

**A** Drop back. We're talking about road safety here, not about feeling hard done by because others want to drive dangerously. Tailgating is one of the worst habits among British drivers. Look at the carnage in the fog last month. In America, driving too close is a specific offence.

**Q** So instead of making cars brake more quickly, why don't they try to keep cars the right distance apart?

**A** Funny you should ask that. The Prometheus project, which is backed by many major manufacturers, is already working on a collision-avoidance system.

**Q** You mean it stops you from getting too close to the car in front?

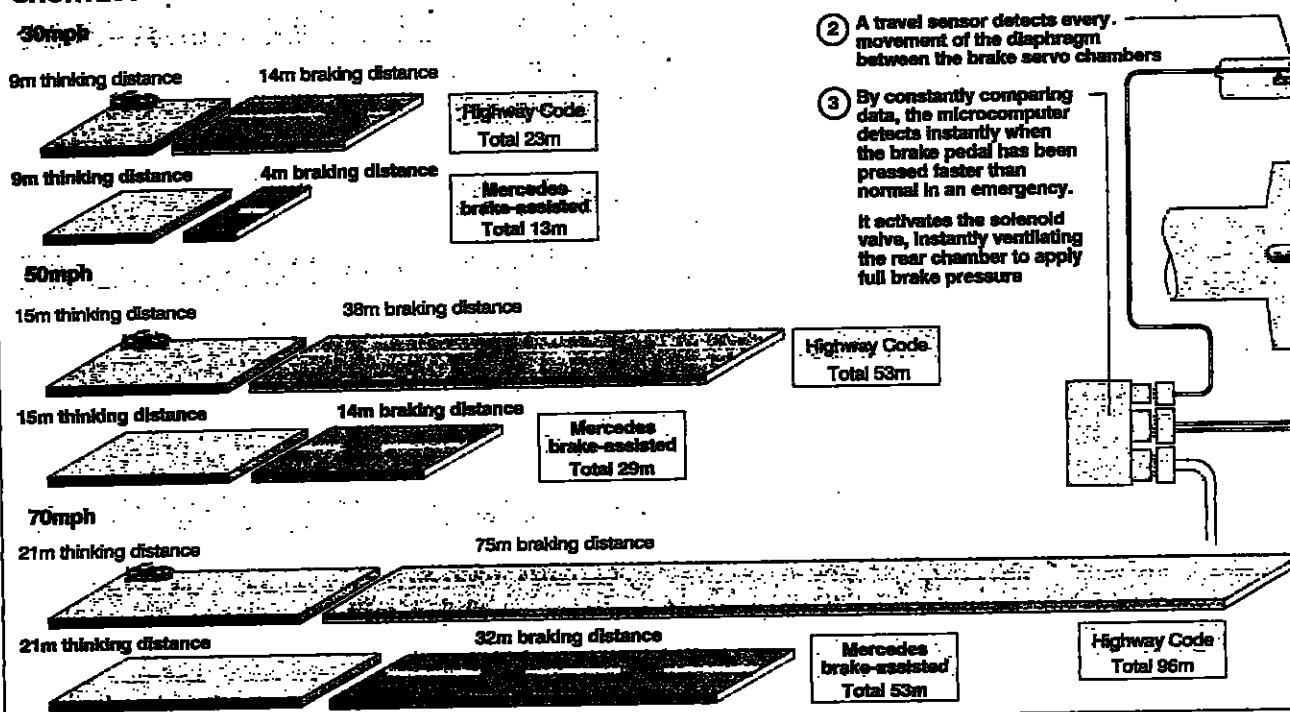
**A** Precisely. It uses a form of radar which measures the distance between vehicles. If it senses the gap closing it will either apply the brakes or lift the throttle automatically to maintain a safe distance. No one is saying how soon it will appear on a production car, but given the speed at which technology moves, watch this space.



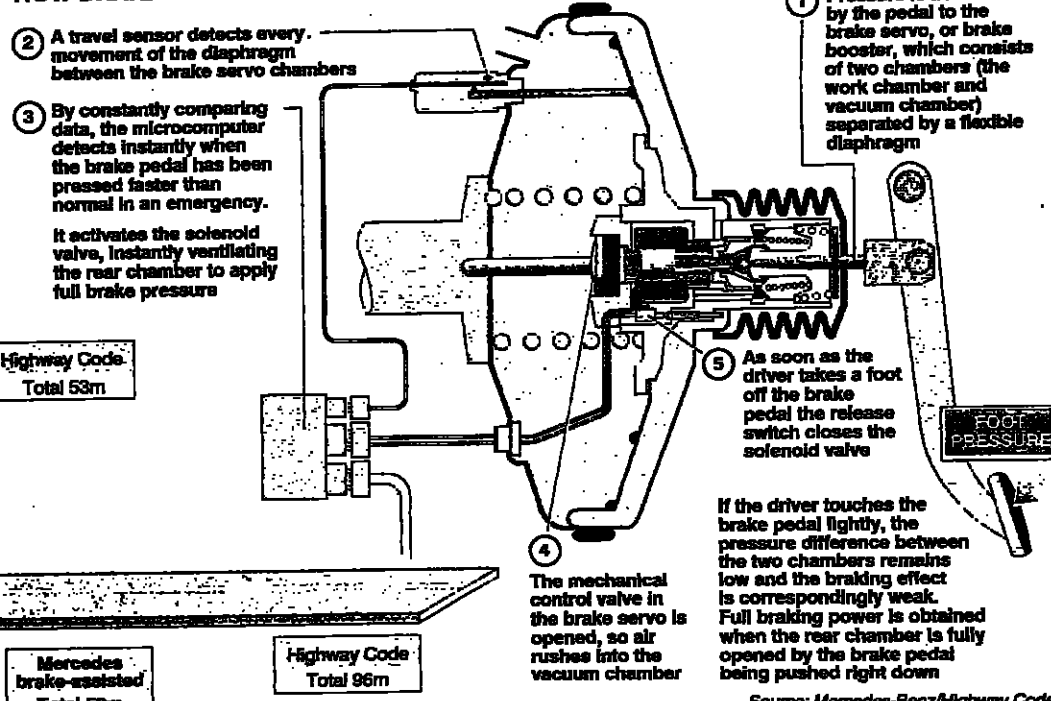
New E-Class keeps over-enthusiastic drivers off skid row with an intelligent system of sensors that applies the brakes before the car is cornered too fast for the conditions

## THE INTELLIGENT BRAKE

### SHORTEST STOPPING DISTANCES



### HOW BRAKE-ASSIST WORKS



Vaughan Freeman on Mercedes' new state-of-the-art stopper

## For crises: an even brake

A recipe for countless rear-end shunts it might seem, but Mercedes-Benz insists that its new device, which gives motorists the reactions of a jet-fighter pilot, is not part of a plot to boost sales of their rear bumpers and boot lids.

Drivers of the new E-Class saloon from Mercedes will be able to stop faster than anyone else on the road thanks to its Brake Assist System. Mercedes claims the system reduces braking distances by up to 45 per cent to ensure that the child, dog or cat that steps out unexpectedly in front of you has a far better chance of surviving.

The problem is, what happens to the drivers behind? The German manufacturer came up with the idea after research found that in 90 per cent of emergencies, when the brakes had to be applied fast, hard and consistently, drivers either did not hit the brakes hard enough, did not keep the pressure on for long enough, or were hesitant about their braking.

Dr Bernd Harloff, head of E-Class development, says: "We are the first manufacturer in the world to use the Brake Assist System, which cuts

emergency braking distances by up to 45 per cent from a speed of 100kph (62mph).

"Brake Assist goes into action when the driver steps on the brake pedal too hesitantly or too gently in a critical situation. In this event the maximum brake power boost is developed automatically in fractions of a second."

By continually examining data from the system's pedal-travel sensor, Brake Assist is able to recognise when the brake pedal is operated at a speed which exceeds the normal limits. It then concludes that an emergency braking situation has arisen and assists the driver in the proposed emergency stop.

"Our scientists found that almost all drivers step on the brake unusually quickly when a critical situation arises," says Dr Harloff.

In effect, the system identifies an

emergency by "learning" the driver's usual driving habits, and reacts when in an emergency the brake pedal is, understandably, pressed much faster than usual.

Brake Assist measures the speed at which the brake pedal is depressed using a pedal-travel sensor which monitors every use of the brake pedal. When the pedal is pressed quickly enough to indicate an emergency, a solenoid valve is triggered which ventilates one of the chambers in the brake booster and full brake pressure is instantly applied.

In practice, when testing the system in rainy and near freezing conditions, BAS responds in an unfussy manner. In non-emergency conditions, without the instantaneous surge of adrenaline that an impending crash triggers, it is very difficult to make the Brake Assist

kick in since the braking foot seems unable to move fast enough.

Given the right simulated emergency conditions however, with a barrier dropped in front of the car without warning on a test strip, BAS comes to the rescue without any major alarm as it intervenes.

What is apparent is the noticeably reduced stopping distance, and at 100kph (62mph) the car takes as little as 40 metres to come to a halt — close to half the Highway Code's 73 metres shortest braking distance for a 60mph stop.

Normally, such rapid braking would mean an instant skid, but as well as Brake Assist as standard on the E-Class, anti-lock braking is provided, which prevents skids and ensures that the car can still be steered without loss of control.

In the long run, as well as fitting the system to other cars in its range, Mercedes-Benz intends to licence BAS so that it will be available to other manufacturers.

But if your car is the one stopping quickest in the M25's outside lane in an emergency, doesn't that mean that everyone behind will end up smashing into your blazing brake lights?

Mercedes-Benz spokesman John Evans says not: "When disc brakes were first introduced, those cars which were the first to be fitted with them were able to stop more quickly than those fitted with drum brakes, and when anti-lock braking systems were first fitted, ABS cars could stop faster."

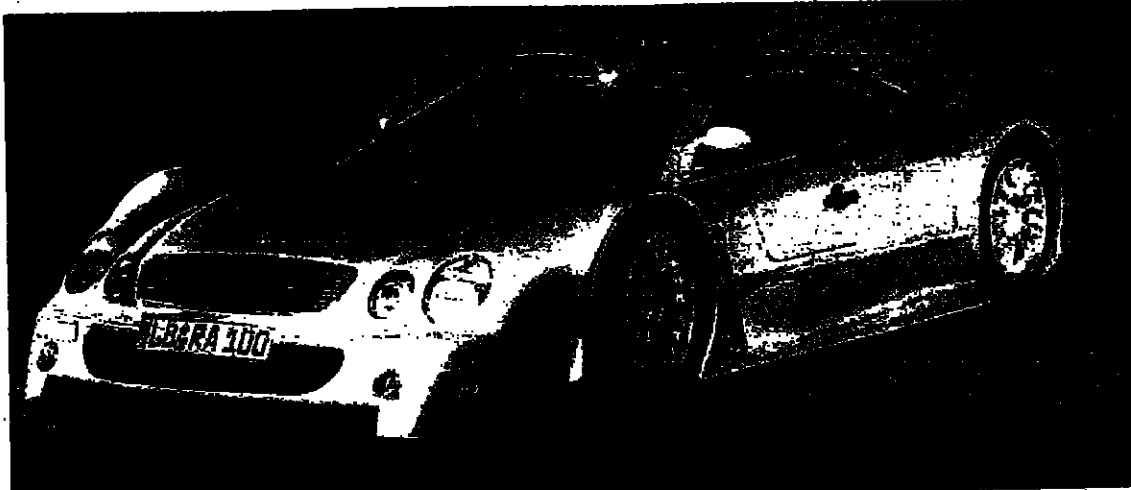
"The number of rear-end crashes did not soar when disc brakes were introduced, but what they did offer when they were first introduced was massively shorter stopping distances," argues Evans.

"We do not envisage a problem of numerous rear-end collisions with Brake Assist. What we will have is E-Class drivers and, of course, other road users, who will be much safer, and able to stop more quickly."

## MERCEDES-BENZ LAUNCHES GT RACER

The revival of GT racing, one of the most spectacular forms of motorsport, continues apace. Most recent entrant is Mercedes-Benz who this week unveiled the CLK-GTR a racing development of the soon-to-be-launched CLK coupé which has been produced in cooperation with the AMG tuning company. It will compete in the new international FIA GT Series for sportscar racing. It carries a 6.9 litre V12 engine producing 560bhp. It has been developed from the plant that powers the company's S-Class limousine in conjunction with the British-based Ilmor company, which also provides the Mercedes engines for McLaren Formula One cars.

The car had its first test last week, mainly in the hands of Bernd Schneider, the 1995 German Touring Car champion, and is said to have met all performance targets. It is likely to make its race debut at the first FIA GT meeting at Hockenheim, Germany next weekend. The car is in the tradition of the famous gull-wing Mercedes 300SL, which dominated sports car racing in the 1950s, and will be taking on entries from Porsche, Lotus, Ferrari, Nissan and others. To qualify for the international series the company has to make at least one road-going car of the same design. The chances are it will make a limited series of ten or 20, and to comply with regulations they will have to cost less than \$1 million each.



CLK-GTR is a development of the new CLK coupé. It will compete in the international FIA GT series



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Kevin Eason on our BTCC team's strong start — now they just need better luck, more grip and less debris

## 'The first two races showed how good the Volvos looked'



Despite our logo on the car, they wouldn't let us peek

This will do nothing to convince customers about Volvo's service schedules: for when Rickard Rydell needed a new engine in his S40, it took the mechanics minutes instead of days.

Rydell discovered that the slings and debris of outrageous fortune can cost dear in motor racing on his first outing in the British Touring Car Championship for the TWR Volvo team, whose progress is being followed this year by CAR 97.

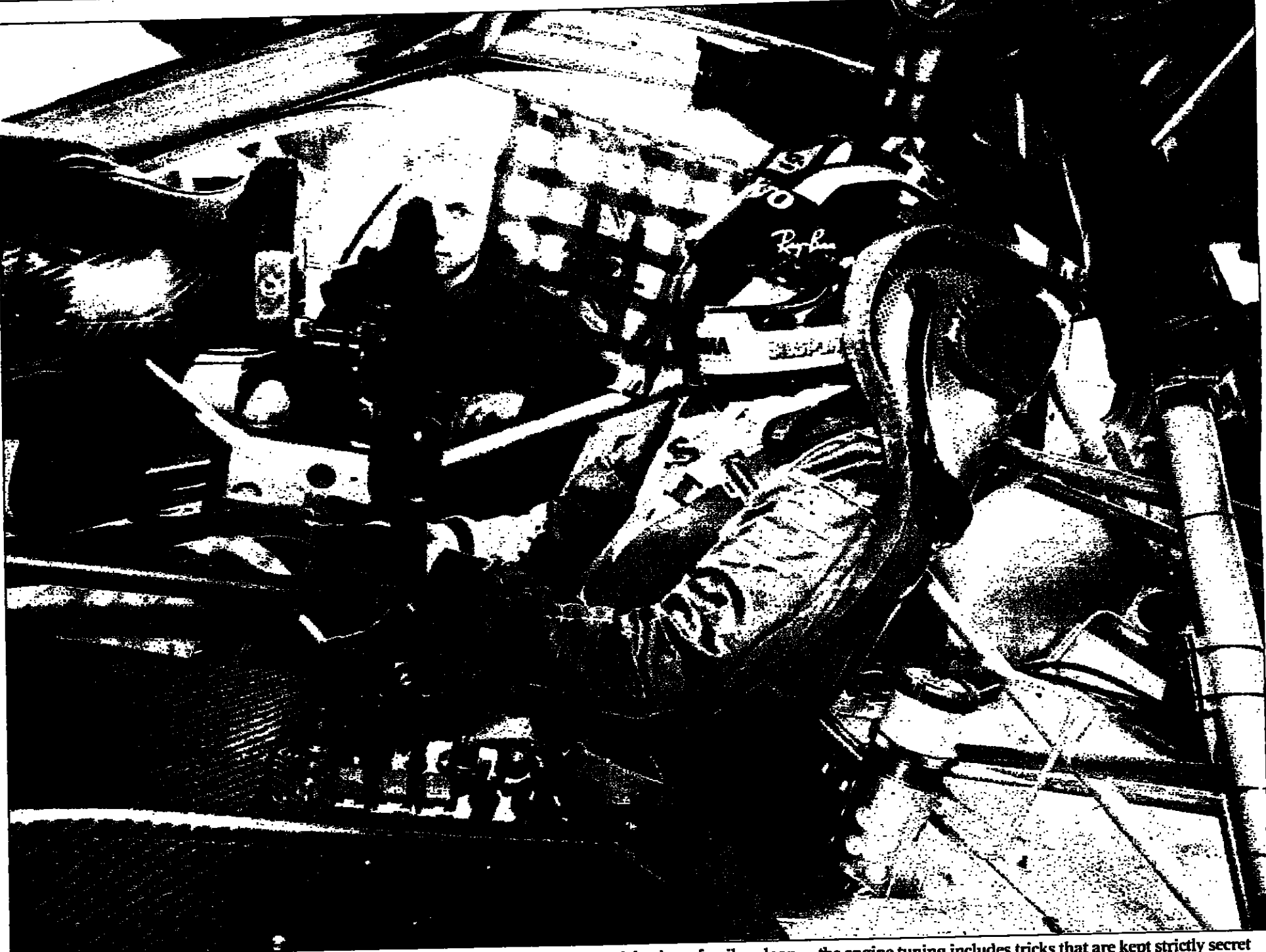
The fabulous Volvo S40s started the weekend looking unbeatable with Rydell, the team's lead driver, posting

record practice times on the Donington circuit.

On race day though, Rydell and teammate Kelvin Burt discovered just what their Formula One rivals, Williams, had up their sleeves with the Renault Lagunas — which won both the first rounds.

In race one, Rydell was hard on the heels of race leader, Alain Menu, and Renault teammate, Jason Plato, when everything went wrong. Suddenly a secure third place turned to nothing when Plato's Laguna flicked track debris into Rydell's radiator. Half a lap from the finish, Rydell's engine gave up.

That gave the pit crew less



TWR Volvo team driver Kelvin Burt readies for the race. Interior shows how his Volvo is no family saloon — the engine tuning includes tricks that are kept strictly secret

than two hours to whip out the remnants of Rydell's race engine and put in another for the second-round race.

Forget the idea that this five-cylinder two-litre is just like the one you have in the family Volvo at home though: the racing S40s have 300bhp available to generate neck-breaking acceleration, thanks to clever tinkering by TWR's

engineers. They take a normal family five-cylinder and create a lightweight power pack that generates loads of power but also costs a fortune: nobody could say how much but you wouldn't want to pay the price for your family estate car.

So secret is their tuning trick that even we — CAR 97, which has The Times' logo on the S40 — were not allowed to see the

engine changeover. That is kept strictly under wraps in case of leaks to other teams desperate to replicate Volvo's increasing BTCC success. Instead, the pit garage doors came down while the mechanics worked furiously.

Meanwhile, Kelvin Burt, in the second Volvo, was celebrating third place after Rydell's demise, but complained of a lack of grip that dogged both drivers.

That they should fret: the only worrying was among the rest of the field, for this first BTCC weekend showed how good the Williams-prepared Renaults and TWR Volvos looked against the opposition.

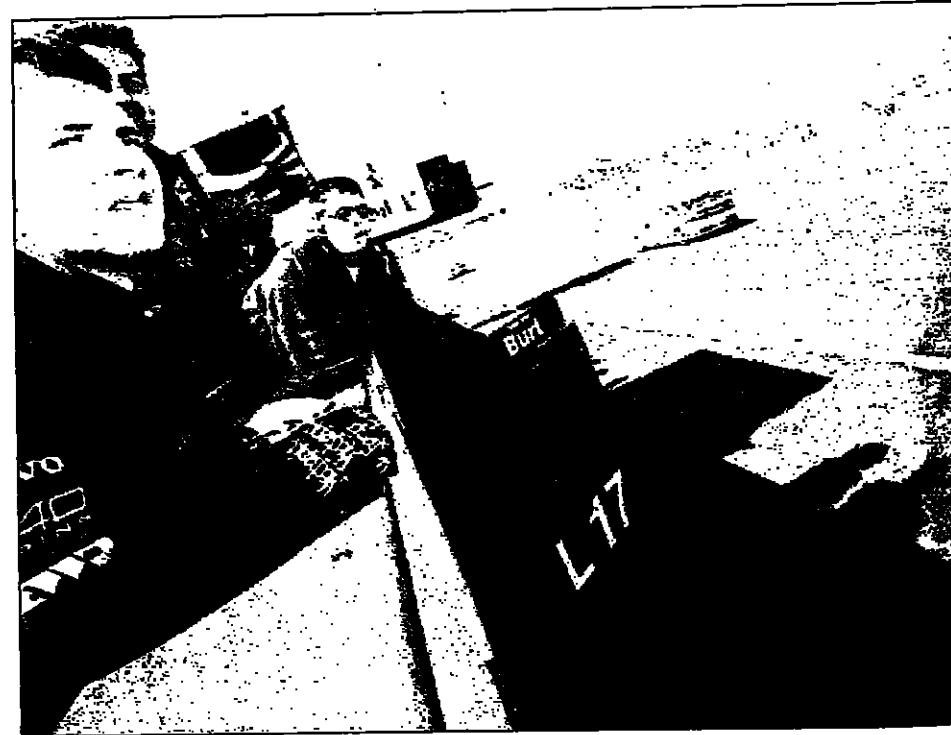
Only Honda's Accords, turned out by Prodrive, the team based in Banbury, Oxfordshire, which makes Colin McRae's Subaru rally car, looked fast enough for a fight.

In the second round, the Renaults and Volvos again tore away from the field, though Jason Plato went off, leaving Rydell to come in three seconds behind Menu. Burt could only manage ninth, still plagued by a lack of grip.

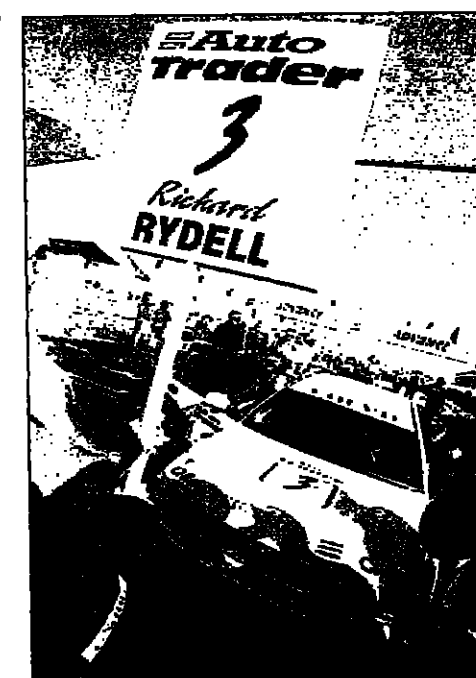
So it is back to the drawing board for TWR's experts, though they believe the next round at Silverstone could tell a much different story. The Volvos are powerful and well-prepared and every race brings a new set of data to tell the engineers where to find another ounce of power.

Then, with a little more luck and less debris, Rydell and Burt could take their first win.

**BTCC Drivers' Championship table:** 1. Alain Menu, 30 points; 2. Jason Plato, 14; 3. Kelvin Burt, John Birtcliffe (Audi) and Rickard Rydell 12.  
**Manufacturers' table:** Renault 30pts; 2. Volvo, 24; 3. Audi, 18; 4. Nissan, 14; 5. Honda, 13. Next race at Silverstone on April 20.



Anxious moments with the pit crew as the team waits to show Burt how he is doing



Volvo's strength shows in Rickard Rydell's grid position, left. Burt takes third prize

## Classic gathering hits the roads

ONE OF the widest selections of classic cars to be seen on the roads sets off from Thrupton race circuit near Andover, Hampshire, on Friday April 18 for the Haynes Publishing Two-Day Classic. The 475-mile non-competitive event has attracted a capacity entry of 330 cars for a scenic and historic tour of the West Country. Oldest car in the field is the 1926 Bentley 3-litre of John Bond-Smith from Oxfordshire. At the other end of the field Aston Martin, Ferrari, Porsche, Jaguar and Triumph from the 1970s are all represented. Haynes Motor Museum in Sparkford, Somerset, hosts the Friday overnight stop and displays a fabulous collection of other historic vehicles. Further details from 01963 440804.



Classics from the 1920s to the 1970s meet at Thrupton

THE CLOSING date for entries to The Times Lease Plan Company Car Driver of the Year competition, our annual search for Britain's best company car driver, has been extended to April 11. Entries are invited from teams of three who drive a company car or other vehicle as part of their remuneration. Entrants must be over 24 and have the backing of their fleet manager. First prize is a trip for two to the Portuguese Grand Prix. Details of regional heats, the Silverstone finals and entry forms can be obtained from Lease Plan 01753 797284.

MITSUBISHI has launched the "Campaign for Galant Driving" to coincide with the introduction of its new Galant range. Every Galant buyer or company car driver and partner will be offered a half-day course by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents to learn about the performance of the car and about hazard recognition and driver perception. "It is designed to improve individual driver performance and promote safer driving through practical examples," says Stephen Dixon, managing director.

# £250

Now we have your attention, we'd like to point out that most DVLA personalised registrations are available from the all inclusive price above.

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